

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NP Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Billings Old Town Historic District

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Generally bounded by Montana Avenue on the north; South 26th Street on the east; 1st Avenue South on the south; and South 30th Street on the west.

not for publication

city or town Billings

vicinity

state Montana code MT county Yellowstone code 111 zip code 59101

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide x local

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register

 determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

BILLINGS OLD TOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MT

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | private |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | public - Local |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - State |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - Federal |

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | district |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | object |

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
36	8	buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
36	8	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

4

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/business, professional,
organizational, financial institution, specialty store,
department store, restaurant, warehouse
DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling
SOCIAL/meeting hall
EDUCATION/library
RECREATION/theatre
TRANSPORTATION/rail-related; road-related
(vehicular)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/business, professional,
specialty store, warehouse
DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling
RELIGION/mission
RECREATION/museum
TRANSPORTATION/rail-related

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque Revival;
LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS
MODERN MOVEMENT/Moderne; Art Deco
OTHER: False-Front Commercial; Western
Commercial; Warehouse utilitarian

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE, STONE
BRICK, WOOD, METAL, STUCCO,
walls: CERAMIC TILE
SYNTHETIC: rubber; METAL, ASPHALT,
roof: OTHER: bitumen
other:

BILLINGS OLD TOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MT

Name of Property

County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Billings Old Town Historic District is located in downtown Billings at the eastern edge of the Clark's Fork Bottom of the Yellowstone River Valley in Montana. The Billings Old Town Historic District is a portion of the historic core of Billings and retains its original configuration as platted in April 1882 with the railroad right-of-way bisecting the downtown. Two primary avenues, Montana to the north and Minnesota to the south, parallel the railroad tracks while numbered streets run perpendicular to the avenues. The Billings Old Town Historic District is urban in its setting and encompasses approximately 20 acres and includes 48 historic properties. Of the 48 properties, 40 are contributing to the historic district including four previously listed properties to the National Register of Historic Places and eight are noncontributing properties. The built environment within Billings Old Town Historic District spans from the initial creation of Billings in the 1880s to 1950 when Billings emerges as a modern city. The district reflects primarily Western Commercial architecture of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Establishing the Billings Old Town Historic District will augment ongoing historic preservation efforts by individual property owners to preserve and protect these historic resources.

Narrative Description

The Billings Old Town Historic District is comprised of some of the oldest development in downtown Billings, Montana. Billings is located in southeastern Montana at the east end of what is historically known as the Clark's Fork Bottom of the Yellowstone River, a crossroads of human activity before the city existed. Billings is nestled between the Yellowstone River to the south and the rimrocks to the north, at the point where the Yellowstone valley narrows and exits the Clark's Fork Bottom. It is the largest city in Montana with a population of over 100,000 and serves as the commercial, industrial and medical center for eastern Montana, northern Wyoming and western North Dakota.

The Billings Old Town Historic District encompasses portions of the historic core of downtown Billings that is divided by the former Northern Pacific Railway right-of-way (now Montana Rail Link).¹ The district consists of two principal commercial avenues, Minnesota and Montana, situated parallel to the railroad tracks and numbered streets that run perpendicular to these two avenues. The Billings Old Town Historic District consists of a total of 48 buildings, 40 which contribute to the district, including four previously listed historic properties. Eight buildings do not contribute to the district.

(Please see Continuation Sheets)

¹ The original Billings townsite runs 55 degrees west of north, but for the purposes of this report, all directions are given to true north.

BILLINGS OLD TOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MT

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance

1882-1950

Significant Dates

1882

1950

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Link, John G.

Cohagen, Chandler C.

Haire, Charles S.

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance for the Billings Old Town Historic District encompasses the historic properties linked by history and purpose that reflect the growth and development of the historic core of downtown Billings from 1882 to 1950.

Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

BILLINGS OLD TOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Billings Old Town Historic District retains integrity and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criteria A and C. The period of significance for the district begins in 1882 with the townsite platting and ends in 1950 when Billings becomes the oil and gas center for the region. Billings Old Town Historic District is significant under Criterion A for its strong association with evolving patterns of the growth and development of downtown Billings history during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century when Billings established itself as the trade and distribution center for the surrounding region. The Billings Old Town Historic District is significant under Criterion C for its representation of Billings built environment from the early 1880s to 1950 and the relationship between the buildings with each other and their shared history.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Billings Old Town Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. The period of significance begins in 1882 with the townsite creation and ends in 1950 when Billings emerged as the oil and gas center of the region.

The Billings Old Town Historic District is significant under National Register Criteria A for its strong association with the economic and social patterns of development of Billings in the late nineteenth century and the first half of twentieth century. The Billings Old Town Historic District reflects vestiges of its growth from the rough 1880s railroad town to become the prosperous trade center for the region in the late 1890s and early twentieth century.

The Billings Old Town Historic District prosperity was further augmented by the homesteading "boom" years from 1909 to 1916. The lack of change for many years from 1920 until the post war years represents the stagnation of the regional and national economy, first through agricultural economic slumps in the 1920s and then national economic depression of the 1930s. Change was further dampened by diversion of economic resources to the war effort during World War II. As the rest of the nation, the post war years saw a resurgence of growth and increased population and by 1950, Billings is recognized as a "modern city."

(Please see Continuation Sheets)

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

BILLINGS OLD TOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MT

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

(Please see Continuation Sheets)

Previous documentation on file:

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 16 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	Zone 12	Easting 69373	Northing 5072679
3	Zone 12	Easting 693910	Northing 5072736
5	Zone 12	Easting 694075	Northing 5072804
7	Zone 12	Easting 694248	Northing 5072855
9	Zone 12	Easting 694237	Northing 5072770
11	Zone 12	Easting 694188	Northing 5072650
13	Zone 12	Easting 693838	Northing 5072451

2	Zone 12	Easting 69 3879	Northing 5072782
4	Zone 12	Easting 694050	Northing 5072839
6	Zone 12	Easting 694213	Northing 5072906
8	Zone 12	Easting 5072822	Northing 694198
10	Zone 12	Easting 694144	Northing 5072710
12	Zone 12	Easting 693868	Northing 5072415
14	Zone 12	Easting 693878	Northing 5072481

BILLINGS OLD TOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Billings Old Town Historic District boundary point of beginning is at the west side of North 30th Street at the alley entrance. From here, it proceeds in an easterly direction across North 30th Street along the alley, crosses North 29th Street and continues eastward along the alley to the northeast corner of the building at 2815 Montana Avenue where it turns south and continues southward until it reaches the centerline of Montana Avenue; then turns east and continues along the centerline until reaching the intersection of North 27th Street and Montana Avenue. Here it turns south until reaching the railroad tracks where it turns east and proceeds along the railroad tracks until it is where it turns and runs south crossing the railroad tracks to the centerline of Minnesota Avenue. From this point it proceeds east along the centerline of Minnesota Avenue until it reaches the intersection of Minnesota Avenue and South 26th Street where it turns and runs south until it reaches the alley entrance on the west side of South 26th Street. From here the boundary turns west and runs along the alley to the centerline of South 27th Street; then it turns south to the intersection of South 27th Street and 1st Avenue North. At this point it turns west and proceeds along the centerline of 1st Avenue North until it reaches a point that is beyond the west wall of the building at 24 S. 30th Street. From this point, it turns north a short distance until it is beyond the north wall of the same building at 24 S. 30th Street. At this point, it turns east and proceeds eastward to the centerline of South 30th Street; then it turns and runs north to the end of South 30th Street and continues north to cross the railroad tracks to the intersection of Montana Avenue and N. 30th Street where it continues north on North 30th Street to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Billings Old Town Historic District boundary encompasses portions of the historic core of commercial buildings along the two primary business corridors, Montana Avenue north of the railroad tracks and Minnesota Avenue south of the railroad that represent the history of downtown Billings, MT from 1882 when the original townsite was platted to 1950 when Billings became recognized as the oil and gas center of the region. The boundary also incorporates historic buildings within the railroad corridor plus warehouses and commercial properties situated between Minnesota Avenue and First Avenue South.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joan L. Brownell with contributions by Chere Jiusto and Alison LaFever

organization Old Town Neighbors, Inc.

date April 2010

street & number 2 South Broadway

telephone 406-248-3141

city or town Billings

state MT

zip code 59101

e-mail _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

BILLINGS OLD TOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Billings Old Town Historic District

City or Vicinity: Billings, MT

County: Yellowstone

State: MT

Photographer: Joan L. Brownell

Date Photographed: January 2010

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of ____.

(Please see Continuation Sheets)

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Multiple owners (Please see Continuation Sheets)

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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The majority of buildings today are still commercial. Exceptions include the former Parmly Billings Memorial Library (now the Western Heritage Center museum), the Northern Pacific freight depot used by Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railway, and the former Eagles Hall, now the Montana Rescue Mission. In the past ten years, property owners have rehabilitated five buildings within the district. Two buildings received tax credit rehabilitation certification and one is in the final stages. These rehabilitations are outstanding examples of how historic preservation has the ability to revitalize a neglected, abandoned building and its neighborhood. Recent facade renovations have also occurred to buildings within the district with varying degrees of success in regard to preserving historic appearance. Several buildings within the district are presently vacant and for sale. One vacant building is owned by the City of Billings.

The district has 12 commercial properties within the railroad right-of-way: three on the north side and seven on the south side. These properties range from one to four-story masonry warehouse and retail buildings, a former Northern Pacific freight depot, a Quonset hut and the Richardson Romanesque Parmly Billings Memorial Library (now the Western Heritage Center), the most imposing building within the district. Two buildings within the right-of-way do not contribute to the district.

Eight commercial buildings line the north side of Montana Avenue north of the railroad corridor. Only two buildings remain of the once bustling block between North 28th and 29th Street. Renovations to the storefronts on the historic Losekamp Block respected its historic design, while a second older building is a noncontributing building due to an insensitive 1990s facade renovation. Six brick commercial historic properties exhibit an eclectic mix of architectural styles along the north side of Montana Avenue in the 2900 Block. These buildings overall reflect the development of this block of Montana Avenue after the turn of the century into the late 1930s.

The length of Minnesota Avenue from South 26th Street to South 30th Street reflects its history beginning in the early 1880s to the first two decades of the twentieth century with few modern intrusions but also shows the loss of buildings through fire or demolition. The 2600 block holds two historic brick buildings that stand isolated after the City of Billings demolished the rest of the block in the 1980s. The L&L Building has recently been rehabilitated and returned to its original glory with its iron-front while the Maple Leaf Club stands abandoned.

The Minnesota Avenue streetscape between South 27th Street and South 28th Street (or South Broadway) conveys the historic character of the 1890s and early 1900s western commercial architecture by the row of one and two-story brick buildings that line the south side of the street. The McAdow Store at the prominent southwest corner is the only remaining wood frame building within the district that exhibits a false-front, the most prevalent architectural style in the early years of downtown Billings.

The 2800 block between South 28th Street and South 30th Street is the famed Yegen Block where beginning in the mid-1880s, the Yegen Brothers came to dominate Minnesota Avenue and occupy most of this block. Today, the block reflects the post-Yegen period after 1926 when Elliott's Furniture opened in the building. The remodeling of the building in the late 1930s and 1940s completely altered the historic appearance of the Yegen Block. The building today reflects Elliott's Furniture and a more urban perspective compared to the early Billings department store of the Yegens. However, in a sense, the block is still able to hold the association with the Yegens and their domination of Minnesota Avenue from the mid-1880s to the 1920s due to the fact that a single historic expression still occupies almost the entire extent of the original Yegen Block.

The last block on Minnesota Avenue between South 28th Street and South 30th Street illustrates locally-owned commercial development between the turn of the century to 1912. Two wood frame buildings are extant at the east end of the block and an one-story and two-story brick commercial building anchor the west end. There are two noncontributing building on this street built after 1950.

The remainder of buildings within the district are situated on side streets between Minnesota Avenue and 1st Avenue South. They are a mixture of commercial uses and all built in the 1920s and 1930s. Three large brick historic warehouses and three automobile-related garage building, all sit at intersections with 1st Avenue South. Only three buildings are mid-

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block on the streets, two along South 27th Street: a 1930s multi-use brick building and a 1940s Safeway store of concrete. Two of the garage buildings and the two buildings on South 27th Street display Art Deco detailing. The Rex Laundry on South 28th Street is a noncontributing building.

The following provides a historic narrative and architectural description of the properties within the Billings Old Town Historic District.

SOUTH OF TRACKS

2525 Minnesota Avenue

Bissinger and Company

Contributing

The Bissinger and Company Building is within the railroad right-of-way on the north side of Minnesota Avenue. Built in the early 1910s as a hide and fur warehouse, Bissinger and Company occupied the building by 1921. Bissinger and Company originated out of San Francisco and specialized in hides, wool and other furs throughout the west. They occupied the building into the 1940s.

This small, single-story brick warehouse has an elevated concrete foundation and is rectangular in its massing. Five window and door openings are spaced across the facade (south) wall that fronts Minnesota Avenue. Each opening is capped by three courses of brick in segmental arches. The north wall adjacent to the tracks also features five segmental arched openings across the wall and displays a ghost sign that reads "Bissinger and Co." Most historic openings have experienced some alterations.

2601 Minnesota Avenue

Hardware Warehouse

Noncontributing

This warehouse building was constructed around 1919 within the railroad right-of-way on the north side of Minnesota Avenue. City directories indicate it served as a hardware warehouse in its west half into the 1950s while the east half was an automobile garage and later a pipe warehouse. The building stands mid-block between a two-story building to the west and a one-story warehouse to the east.

The facade wall of this one-story common bond brick building was extensively remodeled by the property owners in 2008-2009, including modern entry systems, replacement windows, infilled openings and other modern intrusions not compatible to the original historic fabric of the building.

2605 Minnesota Avenue

Swift & Co. Building

Contributing

The Swift Building is a two and one-half story warehouse building built in 1916 and located along the north side of Minnesota Avenue within the railroad right-of-way. Swift and Company, a national meat processing and shipping business, used this warehouse to store processed meat that arrived by rail and then held in large coolers to be sold at wholesale to local meat markets and restaurants. Swift and Company occupied the building from its original construction date into the 1970s.

A certified historic tax credit rehabilitation is near completion for the Swift Building. The primary facade fronts Minnesota Avenue and displays simple decorative brick detailing. The main entrance is near the center of the facade framed with a decorative brick pattern. East of the entrance is the former loading dock with two openings that consists of an original door with transom and a window assembly installed in 2009 that replaces a modern overhead door. West of the entrance are two large original window openings with flat brick heads and a continuous band of limestone that serves as a shared sill. Each opening features a triple group of three-over-one double-hung windows, with a wider center window. The second floor fenestration is symmetrical with four similar windows across the wall, all with stone sills. The building is crowned by two triangle parapets capped with limestone.

The north wall faces the railroad tracks and exhibits a symmetrical first floor level with alternate three-over-one double-hung windows with three half-light fixed double-doors. The second story features two original multi-pane window

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openings. Above these windows is a ghost sign that reads "Swift and Company." A square meat smoking tower is situated in the northeast corner of the building.

The interior of the building reveals the building's heavy post and beam construction and the rehabilitation preserves many original features like vertical wood plank and beadboard walls and original meat coolers. The building now consists of living lofts.

*2611 Minnesota Avenue**Price Motor Sales**Contributing*

The Price Motor Sales Quonset Hut is situated within the railroad right-of-way near the northeast corner of Minnesota Avenue and South 27th Street. Built in 1948 as a garage and motor sales shop, it now serves as the private garage for the tenants of the Swift Loft Building to the east.

The Quonset hut is a prefabricated structure of corrugated steel in a semi-circular form. The Quonset hut has a false western commercial brick front. The brick front displays dark brown brick accents and is asymmetrical, holding two large storefront windows covered over with plywood and a large overhead garage door. A symmetrical stepped parapet tops the building trimmed in a basket weave and capped with brick coping.

*2624 Minnesota Avenue**L&L Building**Previously Listed/Contributing*

The L & L Building is a two-story brick building located on the southeast corner of Minnesota Avenue and South 27th Street. Sam Lee and his brother Yee Lee built this building sometime between 1893-1896, called the L&L for Lee and Lee. Sam Lee, one of the most successful Chinese businessmen in Billings, and his brother operated a Chinese dry goods store and lodgings house here into the mid 1910s when they sold the property. For the rest of the half century, it served as a succession of saloons and liquors stores. The L&L is situated at the edge of the area known as China Alley, where the Chinese population of Billings concentrated. China Alley contained numerous Chinese businesses and not all were legitimate, especially after the advent of prohibition.

Of the western commercial style, the L&L Building faces north onto Minnesota Avenue with the west facade along South 27th Street. The facade retains its original cast iron columns and intermediate cornice within the storefront which is unique in that it wraps around the corner of the building and extends one bay south on the west elevation. The same storefront system and intermediate cornice design is also repeated at the south end of the west elevation. The fenestration on the street facades exhibits tall windows with segmental arched brick heads and rough-cut sandstone keystones and sills. The building is crowned by a bracketed and ornamented sheet metal cornice again on the street facades. Between 2004 and 2006, the entire building underwent a certified historic tax credit rehabilitation that revitalized the building to resemble its late nineteenth century appearance and exhibits cast iron storefront, sheet metal cornice and segmental arched window openings.

*2702 Minnesota Avenue**P.W. McAdow General Store**Contributing*

The P.W. McAdow Store is located on the prominent southeast corner of Minnesota Avenue and South 29th Street. Believed by some to be the oldest existing building in Billings, the building is a footprint of the original P.W. McAdow and Company Merchandise, constructed and known as McAdow's Corner in 1882, soon after the town's creation. While the original building was partially burnt in the late 1880s, by 1891 it was rebuilt to operate as a saloon into the twentieth century. The front of the building, from the 1920s to 1940s was a clothing store called "The Boston Store. From 1945 to 1960, the Arcade Bar occupied the building front. Smaller stores occupied the spaces along South 27th Street from the 1920s on.

This small one-story wood frame building has its primary facade facing north onto Minnesota Avenue. It exhibits a false front facade and is covered with a gable roof obscured by a low wood parapet along its east wall. Sanborn maps from the early twentieth century reveal that the building was historically divided in its uses with openings along the east wall on

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South 27th Street. A one-story brick-faced addition built in the late 1930s or 1940s exhibits three evenly spaced storefronts with recessed entries.

Despite extensive alterations to openings and the introduction of stucco cladding (although lap siding is visible underneath), the rectangular shape, false front facade and low gable roof of the P.W. McAdow Store allows the building to reflect its historic character and appearance of a late nineteenth century wood frame false front commercial building. It continues to hold a strong historic association to the early history of Billings and the development of Minnesota Avenue.

*2704 Minnesota Avenue**Covington Building**Contributing*

The Covington Building is a two-story commercial building located mid-block on the south side of Minnesota Avenue. This building is one of two commercial buildings within the district that are associated with both the Chinese and Black population of Billings. Lung Kong purchased the property in 1896 and Lewis Quock operated a Chinese restaurant here for 10 years. In 1908, Louis J. Covington bought the property and ran his barber shop in the basement. Mr. Covington was a single black male, who according to the 1910 Census, lived on the second floor with four white males who all were semi-skilled laborers. Mr. Covington owned the building until 1940.

Standing mid-block between two one-story buildings, this building exhibits an intact Mesker Brothers iron storefront that includes a secondary cornice above the storefront capped at either end and surmounted with decorative finials. The centered entry is flanked by multi-paned windows with a side iron gated entrance to the second level on the west side of the storefront. The intact upper façade is symmetrical with four one-over-one double-hung original windows framed by a flat, drip molded hood and a plain sandstone sill. The east wall displays a large painted Coca-Cola ghost sign. The façade has been covered with stucco and all façade openings infilled but the cast iron storefront and historic fenestration allow this building to strongly convey its historic appearance.

*2706-2708 Minnesota Avenue**Standard Building**Contributing*

The Standard Building stands mid-block on the south side of Minnesota Avenue. It was constructed in two phases: the west half built between 1903 and 1912 while the east half was added and designed to match between 1923 and 1927. The Standard Building historically has been occupied by small, modest local businesses typical for downtown commercial properties, including cafes, barber shops and later a cigar business. In the 1940s, it became the Standard Clothing Store for many years.

This single-story common bond brick building has a store space in each half that shares a central recessed entry. A continuous transom band tops the storefronts. Simple decorative brick elements adorn the building topped with a parapet. The storefronts have been modified but all openings are intact.

*2710-2710½ Minnesota Avenue**M. Henihan Saloon**Contributing*

Two small single-story brick buildings share a city lot at this location on the south side of Minnesota Avenue. A frame, one-story building stood at this location from the early 1880s, owned by Joseph Clancy with his partner Michel Henihan ran a liquor and cigar store. The popular Clancy was killed by a vagrant in the saloon. In the only incident of vigilantism in early Billings, citizens took the vagrant from the jail and hanged him from a nearby telegraph pole within 12 hours after being jailed. Henihan built the brick building between 1896 and 1903 and continued to operate the saloon. The building housed saloons, soft drinks in the 1920s during prohibition and a cigar shop in the early 1930s. Beginning in the late 1930s, several restaurants occupied 2710 Minnesota into the 1970s. The smaller 2710½ was also built between 1896 and 1903 and over the years, sporadically served as a barber shop.

With simple brick detailing, the façade at 2710 Minnesota is a single-bay storefront with an entrance offset to the side. A wood pilaster topped with a simple capital detail divides the storefront. A parapet above the storefront features corbelled brick courses ornamentation. At 2710½ Minnesota Avenue, the tiny building has a storefront and entrance offset to the side. The brickwork above the storefront displays a simple molding and centered narrow inset banding. A transom

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crosses above both storefronts. Both buildings are completely boarded over but all historic fabric and design intent intact, particularly the masonry and historic fenestration.

*2712 Minnesota Avenue**Western Bar**Contributing*

The Western Bar is a two-story common-bond brick building that faces Minnesota Avenue to the north. It holds the bar on the first floor and historically lodgings on the second floor but not is vacant. Constructed between 1891 and 1896, this is one of the earliest substantial western commercial style brick building built along Minnesota Avenue. Various businesses occupied the building in the early years but after prohibition ended, it became a bar and has remained so ever since. The façade experienced remodeling in the 1960s and is covered with a stucco-like material. The lower façade has a central recessed entry flanked to each side by large openings filled with glass blocks. In 1998, a substantial metal awning was introduced that spans the storefront and adjacent two building to the west. A low brick wainscot added in 2003-04 extends across the lower façade of the three buildings. The upper façade is symmetrical with three windows placed across the upper façade and filled with glass block. Fortunately, the second floor interior reveals these are original openings with historic trim that retain paired one-over-one double-hung wood windows in the center and single one-over-one wood windows to each side. The side and rear walls display most of their original openings with segmental brick headers and brick sills.

The Western Bar has experienced considerable alterations to its façade since the 1960s but the lower façade retains certain historic components of its original design with the recessed entry and storefront openings. Combined with the upper façade with all its original openings intact, it is an excellent candidate for rehabilitation.

*2714 Minnesota Avenue**Wheel Bar**Noncontributing*

The Wheel Bar is a single-story brick building that sits between two historic two-story brick buildings and shares their walls. Historically this lot was empty throughout most of the first half of the twentieth century. Stucco clads the façade that features a single door and two large window openings filled with glass blocks. A metal awning and brick wainscot across the lower façade extends from the building to the east (Western Bar) to the building to the west (Globe Theater). The building is topped with an oversized wooden wagon wheel, hence the name.

Constructed in 1952, the Wheel Bar is outside the period of significance for the historic district and is a noncontributing property to the Billings Old Town Historic District.

*2716 Minnesota Avenue**Globe Theater and Hotel**Contributing*

Facing Minnesota Avenue to the north, the Globe Theater and Hotel is a two-story common-bond brick commercial building with a commercial space on the first floor and historically lodgings on the second floor, now vacant. This two-story brick building was constructed between 1898 and 1903. Initially a saloon on the first floor, it briefly housed a theatre, presumably a variety house with a small stage in the saloon. The lodgings on the second floor known as the Globe Hotel became associated with the red light district along Minnesota Avenue. Numerous locally owned small businesses occupied the first floor in the 1930s and 1940s.

The upper façade is intact and dominates the building. A pair of round brick arches span pairs of one-over-one double-hung windows, each with a round-arched transom echoing the brick arches. A continuous stone sill crosses the façade. The parapet adds further interest and is trimmed with successive courses of corbelled and angle-laid brick and capped with a raised parapet wall.

The lower façade exhibits the same modifications as the two previous buildings, including the stucco-like cladding, brick wainscot and the metal awning. The two entrances (one to the first floor and the other to the second floor) found offset at the west end of the façade wall are boarded shut and both storefront openings are covered with stucco.

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Section number 7 Page 14*2718 Minnesota Avenue**Crystal Saloon**Contributing*

The Crystal Saloon is a two-story commercial brick building that faces north onto Minnesota Avenue. It has a commercial space on the first floor and historically lodgings and now apartments on the second floor. This building, constructed between 1900 and 1903 first held a cigar shop in its east half and the Crystal Saloon in the west half. By 1912, a restaurant replaced the cigar shop while the saloon remained. Restaurants remained at this location into the 1940s.

Of western commercial style, the symmetrical second story façade is relatively intact. Framed by brick pilasters, the upper façade features two pairs of one-over-one double-hung windows with round-arched hood moldings and rusticated stone sills. Above the windows, the parapet is decorated with courses of angle-laid and corbelled brick. A classic neon sign displaying a camel and cactus projects from the upper façade wall.

In contrast, the lower façade was insensitively altered in 1952 and exhibits split log siding and small window openings between modern metal doors. The only original historic fabric that remains is two slender cast iron columns supporting an in-seam and masonry of the upper floor. A simple molding band crosses the wall at the division between the lower and upper facades.

*2720 Minnesota Avenue**Yukon Bar**Contributing*

The Yukon Bar is a small single-story commercial brick building that faces north onto Minnesota Avenue. Although the exact date of construction is not known, this building is among the oldest commercial brick buildings in Billings. John Staffeck sold the property to Nicholas "Nick" Klos in 1893 who moved his saloon to this location and also established a small cigar stop. Klos rented the building to various businesses like Chinese restaurants, a billiard and pool hall and meat markets. By the 1920s, Ed Keene and his wife Mary opened a service station and auto repair shop here. After several other owners, Andrew Prather and Frank Rue in 1935 opened the Yukon Bar and Beer Parlor which became a Minnesota Avenue fixture for decades.

A recent rehabilitation of the building completed in 2007 remained sensitive to the historic values of this western commercial style building. The façade features a renovated symmetrical storefront with a central recessed entryway flanked to each side by large plate glass windows with small awning units beneath. Above the storefront, transom windows span the façade below a red I-beam that is adorned with star-shaped washers. The top of the façade is finished with three evenly spaced recessed brick panels below a decorative row of denticulate corbelling and sheet metal coping. The west wall is exposed and features doors and windows added in 2007. A one-story brick 1920s addition doubles the building size. A daylight monitor stands on the roof.

*2804 Minnesota Avenue**Yegen Block**Contributing*

The Yegen Block is composed of a series of two and one half story commercial buildings built between 1890 and 1900 that spans most of the 2800 block facing Minnesota Avenue to the north. The individual buildings that comprise the Yegen Block were built by Christian and Peter Yegen between 1890 and 1900. The history of Minnesota Avenue is integrally connected with the Yegen Brothers, who dominated the Minnesota Avenue corridor beginning in the mid-1880s into the 1920s. The Yegen Block provided all the goods and services needed for farmers and ranchers and also catered to the American Indian population. In 1926, they sold their business block to two brothers from Kalispell, Montana, T.W. and W.G. Elliott who retained the name Yegen Brothers until it was formally changed to Elliott's in 1938. At the same time, the Elliott's also remodeled the storefront with a design by Chandler Cohagen, one of the most prominent and successful architects in Billings and Montana. Elliott's became well-known as a high-end furniture store in Billings.

The buildings on the Yegen Block are built of stone and brick and were covered with stucco in the late 1930s to create a cohesive building façade. The building lower façade exhibits a series of large unevenly sized storefront display windows that are asymmetrically spaced across the north wall. Each storefront opening is surrounded by black ceramic glazed tile which in turn are periodically accented by a vertical band of white ceramic tile and a white tile in a diamond shape at the

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top of the tile surround. There are three recessed entries evenly spaced across the wall. The storefronts are capped by a horizontal band of stucco that projects slightly from the face of the wall.

A white band of stucco divides the first and second floor levels. Installed in the 1940s, twenty-two horizontally oriented windows openings set in pairs and filled with glass blocks are evenly spaced across the façade. The east side of the building along South 28th Street is similar in design to the north façade wall. In the south (rear) of the building, the separation of the multiple buildings remains visible, with several original doors and openings intact.

*2822 Minnesota Avenue**Montana Rescue Mission**Noncontributing*

The Montana Rescue Mission is a two-story brick building located on the southeast corner of South 28th Street and Minnesota Avenue. Historically, drugs stores occupied this corner, first constructed between 1896 and 1903. The Eagles demolished the drug store and constructed their new Eagles Hall around 1950. Due to lack of funding, they only built the first floor originally and later added the second floor around 1957 which held a bowling alley.

The building is austere in its design and has little ornamentation or fenestration. It was renovated in the 1970s to serve as the Salvation Army store. The façade faces north onto Minnesota Avenue and is clad with buff colored common bond brick. The building has lost integrity and is a noncontributing building to the Billings Old Town Historic District.

*2902 Minnesota Avenue**Silver Dollar Inn**Contributing*

The Silver Dollar Inn is one of two single-story wood frame commercial buildings located at a prominent corner along Minnesota Avenue. A 1934 historic photograph shows that the building today reflects its 1930s appearance and character as the Silver Dollar Inn situated on the southwest corner of Minnesota Avenue and South 29th Street. A 1900 historic photograph shows the Yegen Brothers Plumbing and Heating supply store originally stood at this corner location and the present building stands in the same footprint. The Silver Dollar Inn opened here in the 1930s and remained in this location until the 1970s. By the late 1920s, six small storefronts lined the east side of the building historically occupied by small locally owned businesses. A shoe repair shop has operated in the same space for over fifty years and its interior retains much of its original fabric. The building has experienced considerable alterations during the twentieth century but today is able to convey its 1930s historic appearance and character. A 1930 aerial photograph even shows the large sign over the canted entry.

The building has a low gable roof, is rectangular in its massing and is covered with stucco. A chamfered northeast corner holds a large glass double-door entry with an accompanying transom. The east façade fronts South 29th Street and is divided into three separate recessed storefront entries that originally accessed six different businesses. All entries are flanked either to one or both sides by a large plate glass window with four metal decorative panels across the top of the opening.

*2910 Minnesota Avenue**Hogue-Robinson and Co. Building**Contributing*

The Hogue-Robinson and Co. Building is a two-story commercial building that sits mid-block on the south side of Minnesota Avenue. Hogue, Robinson and Co. built this retail grocery store in 1900 and it quickly became Robinson & Kirk, the same Kirk who later opened Kirk's Grocery down the street. The building served as a grocery and then meat market with a sausage factory in the rear portion (built by 1912). For many years, the Billings City Mattress Works and Furniture operated out of this building.

The northern-most quarter of the building is two stories tall, has a wood frame and is covered in stucco on the main floor and metal siding on the second floor. The original lap siding is intact beneath the present cladding materials. The southern three-quarters of the building is one-story and built of brick and concrete block. The façade features a central entry that provides access to second floor apartments. To either side of the entry are wood frame storefronts both with central entries (one is recessed). The upper façade holds four one-over-one double-hung windows.

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While a 1999 renovation updated the building with new windows, doors and cladding materials, there has been no structural changes made to the building and original beveled shiplap siding, wood storefront openings, second floor window openings with original interior trim are all intact. Historic photographs reveal the building today is able to convey its historic appearance and character.

*2912 Minnesota Avenue**Hanchett and Sons Furniture Building**Noncontributing*

Built in 1952, the Hanchett and Sons Furniture building is a large two-story, commercial building set back from Minnesota Avenue. Of concrete block construction, this building is distinguished by the rows of large three-over-three metal clerestory windows flanking central openings on both side walls. The Hanchett and Sons Building construction date of 1952 is outside the period of significance for the historic district and is therefore a noncontributing property.

*2920 Minnesota Avenue**Kirk's Grocery**Contributing*

Kirk's Grocery is a single-story, brick commercial building that fronts Minnesota Avenue to the north and has long been recognized as one of the most historic properties along Minnesota Avenue that strongly conveys its historic appearance and character. Richard Kirk purchased this property in 1910 and had built and moved into this one-story brick building by 1912. Richard Kirk and his brother Thomas operated this grocery together until the mid-1930s when Thomas bought out his brother and reorganized the business as Independent Wholesale Grocers, an independent food distribution company. He eventually expanded the business into the adjacent building to the west and then built the building on the corner. Thomas Kirk held the building until 1966.

Of western commercial architectural style, Kirk's Grocery is a single-bay store, with a recessed central entrance flanked by two large pane glass panels framed with wood and capped by a wide, banded transom. The upper façade is distinguished by decorative brickwork that holds a centered name plate that reads "KIRK'S GROCERY" in raised letters. A low parapet has a centered pediment that holds a metal plate with the address number 2920. The east wall is exposed and displays a ghost sign in white on black that reads "KIRK'S GROCERY FLOUR-FEED ETC." Modifications to the façade include face brick and replacement windows that do not detract from the design intent of the building.

*2922 Minnesota Avenue**Big Four Second Hand Store**Contributing*

The Big Four Second Hand Store is a two-story commercial building constructed of red brick. In 1908, Henry Koch purchased two lots from the Yegen Brothers and held the property until 1948. He built this two-story building around 1913. Originally the Big Four Second Hand Store occupied the corner in a two-story wood frame building but a 1935 historic photograph shows that both buildings housed the second hand store. In the late 1940s, Thomas Kirk, who originally partnered with his brother in Kirk's Grocery to the immediate east, bought this building for his wholesale food distribution company.

Fronting Minnesota Avenue to the north, the façade displays a symmetrical storefront with a recessed central entrance. A secondary entrance on the west side of the façade provides access to the second floor. Transoms span the storefronts and entrance. The second floor is symmetrical with four window openings. The upper façade is finished with decorative rows of corbelled and denticulate brick with brick coping at the top. Modifications are similar to Kirk's Grocery and include face brick and replacement windows.

*2924 Minnesota Avenue**Dave's Garage**Noncontributing*

Dave's Garage is a long, rectangular, single-story brick building situated at the southeast corner of Minnesota Avenue and South 30th Street. In 1953, Independent Wholesale Grocers constructed this building.

The building fronts Minnesota Avenue and has a symmetrical façade that consists of a central entry flanked to each side by horizontal rectangular openings filled with glass blocks. The west wall at South 30th Street contains numerous openings along its length including two large overhead garage doors and glass block windows placed high on the wall.

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Constructed in 1953, Dave's Garage is outside the period of significance for the historic district and is therefore a noncontributing building to the Billings Old Town Historic District.

NORTH OF TRACKS

Montana Avenue

2702 Montana Avenue

Oliver Building

Previously Listed/Contributing

The Oliver Building is one of three large-scale commercial brick buildings within the district constructed within the railroad right-of-way along Montana Avenue. This four-story brick commercial building is located on the prominent southeast corner of North 27th Street and Montana Avenue. Construction of the Oliver Building began in 1910 by the Oliver Plow works and was completed in 1912 at a cost of \$35,000. It provided much needed commercial, retail and warehouse space for downtown Billings. In 1930, the building was damaged by fire and the third and fourth floors were rebuilt. The firm of McIver and Cohagen of Billings designed the remodel. Chandler Cohagen was one of the most prominent architects in Billings and across the region.

The Oliver Building is constructed of brick with a heavy timber frame. The primary facades facing the streets maintain an uninterrupted rhythm of fenestration. The first floor has a variety of openings while the second, third and fourth exhibit punched opening pairs. Above a heavy concrete base, the body of the building consists of light brown brick accented with dark brown brick headers and sills at all windows; however, each floor level is unique in its ornamentation and look and consequently the building exhibits a simplified two-part vertical block composition.

A tax credit rehabilitation certification for the Oliver Building was approved in 2008.

2718 Montana Avenue

Selvidge-Babcock Building

Contributing

The Selvidge-Babcock Building is a three-story block building located at the prominent southeast corner of North Broadway and Montana Avenue within the railroad right-of-way. The Selvidge-Babcock Building was constructed c. 1914 at a cost of \$75,000 by two prominent and influential Billings businessmen, William Selvidge and Lewis C. Babcock. Built during the downtown boom period in the early twentieth century, the building initially served as retail and office space. In 1919, just four years after its construction, the Selvidge-Babcock Building was severely damaged by a fire, called the most devastating fire in the history of Billings. In 1922, the renovation was completed, designed by prominent Billings's architect, J.G. Link. The building continued to thrive, housing numerous businesses over the years, including car dealerships, motor supply accessories, paint stores and department stores.

The Selvidge-Babcock Building is constructed of brick with a heavy timber frame and exhibits cast iron columns enclosed in brick pilasters to support the primary facades. The building is symmetrical in its bay spacing, with five sections on Montana Avenue and three on North 27th Street. The first floor storefronts have been altered on both facades and display variety of mis-matched openings. The second and third floor windows maintain an uninterrupted rhythm of fenestration with intact openings but replacement windows. The building has relatively little ornamentation with the exception of subtle brick detailing.

2802 Montana Avenue

Billings Hardware

Contributing

The Billings Hardware Building is a massive commercial building built at the intersection of North Broadway and Montana Avenue within the railroad right-of-way. At this location for over 40 years, the Billings Hardware Building became an institution in Montana as one of the leading commercial endeavors in downtown Billings. Its history can be traced to Colonel Babcock who first opened his hardware store on Montana Avenue in 1882. William Selvidge purchased Babcock Hardware in 1903 and organized the Billings Hardware Company. He broke ground for this building in late 1908 and opened for business in 1909.

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Billings Hardware is three stories high and built of red brick with heavy timber construction. While all openings today are boarded over, the east (North Broadway) storefront spans the entire wall and appears to be a later 1940s addition. A second similar storefront is located on the far west end of the north (Montana Avenue) side. Both upper facades exhibit pairs of window openings (all boarded shut), defined by contrasting white brick flat heads and sills. The floors are divided with a narrow belt course of cream brick. The building is finished with a corralled and denticulate cornice of white brick at the top. The interior retains historic high metal ceilings and square supporting posts. The building is a prime candidate for rehabilitation with most of all its original upper level openings intact.

*2815 Montana Avenue**Colonial Café**Noncontributing*

The Colonial Café is a two-story brick building that fronts Montana Avenue to the south. This building was constructed in 1886 and one of three buildings on the block at that time. The Bailey and Billings Bankers occupied the ground floor with lodgings on the second. Parmly Billings, the son of Frederick Billings, past president of the Northern Pacific Railway, was one of the partners. The building became two separate storefronts in the 1890s and the bank was gone by 1896 (after Parmlys' untimely death). During the first half of the twentieth century, the first floor housed various stores and restaurants after it expanded with a one-story brick addition that served as a kitchen.

In the 1990s, the front façade was altered extensively and original historic fabric lost. Historic photographs show the original building with a tall storefront and six double-hung windows across the upper façade. The top was crowned with a triangle parapet and brick ornamentation. The façade today features light red Roman brick with dark brown brick accents. The lower façade exhibits a symmetrical storefront with a central recessed entry flanked to each side by large aluminum framed plate glass windows topped with blacked out transoms. The upper façade contains two large rectangular window openings with brick accents.

The Colonial Café Building has lost integrity with the extensive renovation to the façade. It no longer reflects its historic appearance or historic association and therefore is a noncontributing building to the historic district.

*2817-2819 Montana Avenue**Losekamp Block**Contributing*

The Losekamp Block is a two-story commercial brick building facing south onto Montana Avenue. John D. Losekamp first opened a boot and shoe store on Montana Avenue in 1884. The business expanded to become a gentlemen's clothing store, advertised as Losekamp/Famous Outfitters. He first built a one-story building at this location around 1890. Losekamp partnered with his son-in-law, John Yates and eventually they built this two-story brick building around 1910-12. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Liberty Theater operated here and later the Rio. In 1931, Max Regger remodeled the theater façade in a "Spanish architectural style and the facade experienced other changes over the years.

The Losekamp building is symmetrical in design and features two storefronts on the first floor and rooms and apartments on the second floor. A 2000 renovation restored the lower façade to its original historic appearance with the exception of recessed entries. The storefronts mirror each other with metal aprons, large display windows and transoms, glass doors and metal awnings. The upper façade is highly ornamented with raised brick, raised keystone and spring arch accents distinguishing the original symmetrical fenestration of centered paired windows flanked to each side by single wider windows with a continuous sill. A large, bracketed metal cornice crowns the building and across the brick frieze, circular medallions and cream brick diamonds complete the design. The same cream colored brick is evenly spaced on the walls. The Fuller Hotel on the second floor was completely remodeled after a 1996 fire.

The 2000 renovation of the Losekamp Block respected its historic design, using historic photographs to restore the lower façade to its' original historic appearance and character. Combined with the rich original ornamentation, the Losekamp Block readily conveys its sense of its history.

*2822 Montana Avenue**Parmly Billings Memorial Library**Previous Listed/Contributing*

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Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Parmly Billings Library is one of Billings' premier historic buildings and stands on the southeast corner of Montana Avenue and North 29th Street within the railroad right-of-way. Built in 1901 during the prosperous years at the turn of the century, Frederick Billings, Jr. gave the building to the city in memory of his brother, Parmly Billings, who lived for a few years in Billings and died an untimely death at a young age. They were both sons of Frederick Billings, Sr., the former president of the Northern Pacific Railway Company. Today the Parmly Billings Library is the Western Heritage Center, a regional interpretive museum.

Designed by prominent Montana architect Charles S. Haire in the Richardson Romanesque style, this impressive building is constructed of locally quarried sandstone and exhibits steep pitched roofs, a massive rounded arched entrance framed by two turrets and deep stone arched windows with turrets flanking both sides. The entrance is topped by a keystone and carved letters that spell out Parmly Billings Library.

2822 Montana Avenue

Ralston Cabin

Noncontributing

Located within the Western Heritage Center campus, the Ralston Cabin is a single-story, rectangular log cabin that stands perpendicular to Montana Avenue and faces west. The cabin is constructed of round logs joined by corner-notching and covered with a low gable roof. An exterior stone fireplace is centered on the north gable end. In 2004, the cabin was moved to this location and has been restored as an interpretative exhibit to reflect J.K. Ralston's studio. J.K. Ralston was a noted western artist who lived in Billings for many years. He built this cabin with his son in 1947 and the family occupied the cabin until 1967 when it was originally located on Grand Street.

The Ralston cabin has been moved twice its construction in 1947 and therefore has lost integrity. It is a noncontributing building to the Billings Old Town Historic District.

2902 Montana Avenue

Northern Pacific Railway Freight House

Contributing

The Northern Pacific Freight House is a long, rectangular, one-story brick building located on the southwest corner of Montana Avenue and North 29th Street within the railroad right-of-way. The original Northern Pacific freight house stood perpendicular with North 30th Street and served downtown businesses throughout most of the first half of the twentieth century. The corner location was empty until it became a car dealership around the early 1930s. In 1947, the remodeling of the freight house began and it opened in 1948 as "one of the most modern setups in the country."

Originally covered freight loading platforms extended several blocks further west along the tracks. The building sits on an elevated concrete foundation with a full basement and has a low gable roof. Numerous original openings span both walls but most are infilled with lap siding and/or modern doors and windows.

2905-2907 Montana Avenue

American Dry Cleaners

Contributing

American Dry Cleaners is a two-story brick commercial building that faces south onto Montana Avenue. A wood frame building stood at this location that housed several restaurants in the early twentieth century. Erected by 1923, American Dry Cleaners occupied the building by 1930 and remained here until the 1940s. A 1935 historic photograph available for this block of Montana Avenue reveals that the American Dry Cleaner building along with several other buildings on the block convey excellent historic appearance and character.

The building has an asymmetrical storefront with a recessed entrance and a second entry offset to the west of the façade to access second story rooms. The storefront has been updated with replacement large glass panel with transoms above and a canvas awning. The storefront is subtly framed with raised vertical and horizontal brick and accented with a centered cast stone keystone. The upper facade has three symmetrically placed windows, each with a keystone/lintel and sill of cream-colored cast stone. The facade is crowned with a cornice of cream-colored cast-stone across the top accented by a centered stone keystone with two decorative brackets at each end. A curvilinear parapet finishes the wall, again accented by a dash-dot-dash of cream-colored cast stone.

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American Dry Cleaners is a mid-block building but abuts one-story buildings to each side. Historic advertisements enhanced both side walls. The east wall sign reads "CARSON JUST EATS" while the west wall sign is mostly illegible except for "RYERSON." These same signs are visible on 1935 historic photographs.

*2909-2911 Montana Avenue**Connolly Saddlery**Contributing*

The historic importance of the Connolly Saddlery to the prosperity and growth of downtown Billings cannot be understated. For over 75 years, the renowned Connolly Saddlery brought ranchers from all over eastern Montana, northern Wyoming and elsewhere to purchase their custom-made saddles, tack and western wear. The Connolly brothers, John T. and Patrick H., first opened a saddle shop in Billings in 1913. In 1919, they erected a new brick building at 2911 Montana Avenue to house their shop. Patrick took over the business in 1929 and it remained a family business until they sold it in 1995. In the 1960s, Connolly Saddlery purchased the building at 2909 to the east and cut an opening in the common wall to expand their business. The building at 2909 Montana was built around 1942 as a government building and later housed the Bureau of Reclamation.

The Connolly Saddlery today is a wide, single-story brick building that consists of two buildings with a common façade renovated in the mid-1980s. The façade faces south onto Montana Avenue and consists of two storefronts with separate doorways set under a decorative iron balcony at center. Between the doors is a brick framed fixed-pane window. Replacement glass doors access each half of the building and storefronts display one large glass panel. The upper and lower façade is divided by a decorative band of a single row of headers and a second row of soldier brick across the wall. The upper façade is accented with a centered sign panel that once read "Connolly Saddlery" flanked to each side by two cream-colored diamond shaped raised brick design elements. The building is finished with a parapet that rises to a shallow point at center above the sign panel and has cream-colored brick coping.

Pam Connelly indicated that the front façade renovation is basically an envelope over the original facades of 2909 and 2911 Montana Avenue with original openings intact. A 1948 historic photograph of the Connolly Saddlery building reveals that the upper façade today closely mirrors the detailing of the original façade. It appears that the renovation made a concerted effort to preserve or replicate historic elements of the original façade, undoubtedly so the store would still be familiar to their loyal customers.

*2919 Montana Avenue**Billings Times**Contributing*

The Billings Times Building faces south onto Montana Avenue and sits mid-block. It is a small, one and one-half story brick commercial building. The Billings Times Building is one of the few buildings in Billings that has remained continuously in use by the same entity since it was built. John D. Matheson created the Billings Times in 1891 and in 1899 sold the paper to Micajah C. Morris from Arkansas. Mr. Morris built this building in 1907 and the Morris family retained ownership until the 1970s. The present owners' father, Craig Turner, came to work for the paper in 1960 and purchased it in 1979. Therefore the Billings Times has had only three owners in over 100 years. The paper was a weekly newspaper until the late 1930s and later became primarily a legal publication.

The front façade features a 2002 renovated symmetrical aluminum storefront with a central recessed entryway sensitively designed to preserve historic elements of the original façade. The entry is flanked by large glass windows. Above the door and windows are two rows of transom windows and a canvas awning that reads "The Billings Times." The top of the façade is original and finished with two decorative rows of corbelled and denticulate brick.

*2921 Montana Avenue**Service Candy Company**Contributing*

One of the most architecturally unique building on Montana Avenue, the Service Candy Building is a small, one-story commercial building located mid-block on Montana Avenue whose primary façade faces south onto Montana Avenue. In 1937, Service Candy Company, a wholesale distributor of consumer goods, moved into this newly constructed building and remained here until 1957. Prominent Billings architect Chandler Cohagen designed the building which exhibits Art Deco design elements, as the use of glass block, asymmetrical layout and concrete scoring.

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The building is built of brick with a concrete south façade that faces Montana Avenue. The façade is asymmetrical in design and painted pink. The façade features a large fixed picture window that is framed on both sides and above with glass block. An entry door located just east of center displays nine glass block inset in its upper half with a narrow transom above. A small and narrow, vertically oriented fixed window stands immediately east of the door. Above the storefront level, the façade is ornamented with a checkerboard pattern of simple rectangular shapes scored into the concrete.

2923 Montana Avenue

Poudre Furniture Building

Contributing

The Poudre Furniture Building is a two-story commercial red brick building located on the northeast corner of Montana Avenue and North 30th Street. Of the western commercial architectural style, the Poudre Furniture Building was built in 1916 by A.B. Poudre, who remained at this location until 1927. The 1923 Sanborn map shows that the second story served as a dance hall. A 1935 historic photograph reveals that the upper façade of the building retains its original historic appearance and character.

The buildings' primary façade faces Montana Avenue and its secondary façade faces west onto North 30th Street. The original storefront had a recessed entry flanked by two display windows with a tall transom band above. Altered in the early 2000s, the storefront today is finished with high, full glass panels framed in aluminum above a brick base. A wood canopy is suspended above the storefront. The storefront wraps around to the east wall that holds a glass door and window with a tall transom above.

The upper facades of both the east and south wall retain their original design overall. The primary façade features three large window openings with segmental arch heads that share a continuous sill course. Each arched head is composed of four courses of brick with the top course projecting outward like a drip cap. The façade is finished with a decorative corbelled brick cornice that is trimmed by recessed panels of brick and a sheet metal coping. Tie-rods with star-shaped heads support and ornament the masonry.

The west side wall along North 30th Street has an asymmetrical lower façade that contains various door openings including the main entry at the south corner. The upper façade features eleven window openings evenly spaced across the wall that share a continuous sill course. The top of the wall is adorned with five rectangular brick panels. The east wall has ten window openings across the upper level, all with brick sills, segmental arched heads and replacement windows. A ghost sign reads "Central Sheet Metal Works" on the south end of the wall and another at the north end reads "Crosby Chix Hatchery."

STREETS

South 26th Street

Maple Leaf Club

10 South 26th Street

Contributing

The Maple Leaf Club is a two-story commercial brick building and one of two historic buildings remaining in the entire block between South 26th Street and South 27th Street, in addition to a parking lot and city skate board park. The City of Billings demolished the rest of the block in the 1980s. The building stands vacant and all openings throughout the building except for three façade metal doors are covered with wood.

Constructed between 1903 and 1912, the Maple Leaf Club holds an interesting association with both the Chinese and Black population of Billings in the first half of the twentieth century. Two African-American women from Omaha, Nebraska, Leetta "Billy" Adams and Ella Reed, owned the property in the late 1910s and early 1920s. In its early years, the building served a variety of retail, restaurant and saloon tenants with lodgings upstairs. During prohibition, two black men, August Holt and John G. Florez, had soft drinks businesses in the building. Yee Chew, a Chinese immigrant, lived upstairs. In the 1930s, this building became home to the Maple Leaf Club, a black night club notorious for its underground narcotics use.

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One of the largest narcotic raids in Billings took place at the Maple Leaf Club in 1934 where several Chinese men were arrested. The Maple Leaf Club continued into the 1940s and is remembered as a "rough place."

The Maple Leaf Club faces South 26th Street and sits on the southern half of the rectangular lot. The façade is divided into three, large, unevenly spaced storefront openings with three adjacent solid metal door entries. The storefront openings and doors are topped by transoms. Above the storefront level, subtle brick detailing extends across the façade, including two courses of projecting brick and header courses above each storefront opening.

The upper facade features five large window openings symmetrically spaced across the wall. The window openings exhibit segmental arched heads with raised keystones and rough-cut sandstone sills. The facade wall is finished with a corbelled brick cornice and rough-cut sandstone coping. The other three walls have little ornament but all openings exhibit segmental arched heads and all windows have brick sills. The interior of the building retains its original trim and the stairway to the second floor is bordered with wainscoting and has a wood newel post and railing.

South 27th Street

Glen Apartments

14 (16) South 27th Street

Contributing

The Glen Apartments building is a two-story commercial brick building that faces east onto South 27th Street, just south of Minnesota Avenue. An early 1930s aerial historic photograph shows building materials lying on the ground at this location. In 1933, the Grand Garage is listed at this address by the city directory and the garage remained here into the 1940s. The second floor today houses twelve apartment units and historically was called the Glen Apartments from its date of construction.

The east façade is built of red and brown brick with asymmetrically spaced windows and doors of different sizes. It is divided into three bays that are separated by brick pilasters that protrude slightly from the façade wall and visually frame each bay. The central, somewhat narrower bay, holds an aluminum storefront system that is recessed at an angle and has a glass entry door. This system replaced an overhead garage door and the garage bollards are still in place. The north bay has a large three-pane display window with transom above and the south bay has a center display window flanked to each side by entry doors.

The upper façade exhibits five double-hung windows unevenly spaced across the wall with brick sills and soldier brick headers. Above the windows, the building is decorated with brown brick ornament featuring triangular designs in each bay, similar to an Art Deco style. The façade wall is finished by a parapet again exhibiting brick decorative design and topped with concrete coping. The north side wall is utilitarian in character and heavily fenestrated. The wall exhibits several ghost sign remnants, the most intact reads "Crazy Carl's Automotive Finance Center" painted over an older sign that reads "Greasing, General Repairs, and Gas-Oils."

Safeway Store

18 South 27th Street

Contributing

The Safeway Store is a one-and one-half story commercial building located on South 27th Street just north of First Avenue South. This building was built in 1942 by Safeway, Inc. and served as a grocery store for south side neighborhoods until 1970. John G. Link designed this building and two other Safeway store buildings in Billings as well as numerous Safeway stores throughout Montana.

The Safeway store faces east onto South 27th Street and is constructed of board formed concrete and retains simple Art Deco ornamentation on the east façade. The façade is very symmetrical with a centered entry within an aluminum storefront. Original red and block tile is underneath the present gray brick wainscot at the base of the storefront. The original red metal canopy projects above the storefront. Two large embedded concrete pilasters at each end of the façade visually frame the building and parapet. The pilasters are ornamented with vertical relief lines scored into the concrete. Horizontal lines scored into the concrete in pairs of three across the upper façade present a symmetrical decorative design. The top is finished with three horizontal lines across the façade wall. The hard-edged, concrete relief

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ornamentation is characteristic of the Art Deco style. The south side wall is divided by concrete pilasters into seven bays and covered with stucco.

South 28th Street (South Broadway)

1 South Broadway

Armour Cold Storage

Previously listed/contributing

In 2001, the Armour Cold Storage building was the first building on Minnesota Avenue to be rehabilitated and successfully receive a tax credit certification. First housed in a building to the east (which later burned), the Armour Cold Storage Building was constructed around 1918 and the company remained in the building through the mid-1930s. It then became a wholesale hardware store and later a furniture warehouse and showroom. The interior renovation retains many original features from its days as a warehouse, including the 1918 elevator and metal cold storage doors.

The building is a two-story, red brick warehouse of massive post and beam construction located on the northeast corner of South 28th Street and Minnesota Avenue within the railroad corridor. Built in the Western Commercial style, the south and west façades feature simple brick corbelling at the cornice and cast stone fenestration trim as modest decoration. Window openings on the south and east facades exhibit original one-over-one double-hung windows with replacement glazing. They all exhibit flat brick headers and cast stone sills. The south wall appears symmetrical with six windows across the upper level. The south façade once contained a central loading dock that has since been rehabilitated into an aluminum and glass storefront grid system. Two windows flanked this system to each side. The west entrance is placed left of center and framed with cast stone and holds a glass door topped by an original transom. Seventeen window openings are regularly spaced throughout the west façade wall.

The north side wall lies adjacent to the railroad tracks. A shed roof extends the entire length of the wall that covered the original loading dock. The metal roof is supported by eight triangular wood brackets and brick corbelling. Windows of varying sizes and some introduced cross the wall.

2 South Broadway

Ryan Grocery Warehouse

Contributing

The Ryan Grocery Warehouse is a massive brick warehouse of heavy timbered construction located on the northwest corner of South Broadway (South 28th Street) and Minnesota Avenue. A centered raised stepped sign panel reads "YEGEN BROS 1917." There is some mystery regarding this sign. The Yegen Brothers, who dominated downtown Billings businesses along Minnesota Avenue into the 1920s, constructed a large wholesale grocery warehouse at this location in the late 1880s and remained here for many years. In March 1915, George Ryan purchased the Yegen's wholesale grocery business. It is not clear why the Yegen name is on the building since this was reportedly a new building c. 1920. Ryan Grocery was a wholesale grocery out of California and utilized this warehouse until they purchased a larger warehouse on Montana Avenue, north of the tracks. KB Chemical moved into the building in the early 1930s and the business has operated here almost continuously to the present day.

The Ryan Grocery Warehouse is spare, sturdy and symmetrical in design and simply ornamented with raised brickwork. The primary facade faces east onto South Broadway with its emphasis upon two storefront displays, centered under a brick panel outlined by a string course of raised brick. Raised brick diamonds and a denticulate coursing trim the panel. The storefront features two large window openings topped with transoms. To either side, entrances are located near the corners and each is surrounded with raised brick and has corniced heads with raised brick keystone detailing and drop moldings. Above the doorways the diamond motif is repeated. Square windows, set singly or in pairs, illuminate the second floor, exhibiting raised brick headers, brick sills and house four-pane window units. The façade is finished with a parapet enriched by a corbelled brick cornice and capped with brick coping.

The south side wall that faces Minnesota Avenue has evenly spaced window openings on the second level with raised flat brick headers and brick sills. The cornice from the east façade wraps around to this wall and extends the length of the building. The lower level window placement is disrupted by two loading bays filled with their original sliding doors fronted

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by a concrete platform. The north wall adjacent to the railroad tracks also has similar windows and two loading bays but exhibit segmental brick arches. The west wall has no openings.

The interior of the building continues to function as it did historically. The front of the building serves as a showroom with its original pressed metal ceiling. The structural elements of the buildings are exposed throughout while the warehouse floors exhibit hard wood floors for traffic flow and soft wood for storage pallets. The original freight elevator is still in service.

19 South 28th Street

Rex Laundry

Noncontributing

This building consists of two 1930s and 1940s additions to the original Rex Laundry that stood south of this location. It is a one-story brick commercial building covered with a gable roof clad with metal siding and has three gabled dormers evenly spaced on both the north and south sides. The west façade features a storefront with a recessed central glass door entry flanked to each side by glass blocks windows that curve into the entry. The façade is crowned by a parapet wall with a center projection. Renovations in the 1990s extensively altered the appearance and character of the building. The building has lost integrity and does not contribute to the historic district.

20 South 28th Street

International Harvester

Contributing

The International Harvester Building is a three-story commercial warehouse located at the southwest corner of South 28th Street and First Avenue South. International Harvester constructed this warehouse in 1927 and occupied this building until the 1970s, providing sales and service for eastern Montana and northern Montana. Although the original windows have been replaced, the building retains all original openings, spatial divisions and historic masonry. The International Harvester building strongly conveys its historic character as a substantial three-story brick warehouse that stands as a major anchor of the historic district.

The building faces east onto South 28th Street. The building is built of brick with a heavy timber frame. The two street facades are built of dark red and brown brick and heavily fenestrated. The east façade is symmetrical with seven vertical rows of windows across the wall. The center bay slightly projects from the wall and is distinguished by a band of cast stone that surrounds the openings within the bay and a parapet above the bay. To each side of the center bay are three openings on each floor. The lower level holds three large storefront openings, now covered with wood painted with a forested scene but with transoms intact. Windows on the second and third floor levels are set in threes above cast stone sills, with a center double-hung flanked by fixed units. The top of the façade is crowned with a cast stone coping.

The south façade is similar in character to the east façade and is symmetrical with eight vertical rows of window openings. These windows are the same replacement windows as on the east façade. The east end of the wall holds two large storefront opening similar to those on the east façade, one filled with a garage door and the other covered over with wood. The north and west walls are divided by concrete columns embedded in brick that frame the openings across the walls. These secondary elevations appear to retain their original multi-pane industrial steel windows.

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29th Street

North 29th Street

4 North 29th Street

Yates Building

Contributing

The Yates Building is a large one and one-half-story commercial brick building with stucco cladding located on the northwest corner of Montana Avenue and North 29th Street. Built by John R. Yates in 1916, the building held a large space in the corner and three smaller stores along North 29th Street. In 1928, the Billings' architectural firm of McIver and Cohagen completed drawings for a potential remodel for a "Garage Building for Mr. Yates." It appears that the present building incorporated some, but not all, of the design. The corner location apparently served as a garage almost continuously through the first half of the twentieth century while numerous small locally owned businesses occupied the storefronts along North 29th Street, including bakeries, beer parlors and meat markets.

The Yates Building facade faces east onto North 29th Street and is divided into three definite bays, separated by brick pilasters and embellished with ornament at the top of the facade. Original storefronts have been replaced with modern systems and covered with a metal awning but the upper facade retains original brick detailing and ornamentation. The pilasters are capped with simple T-shaped brick ornament. Each bay is marked by simple rectangular brick relief. A wood cornice wraps around both street facades and is supported by large wooden brackets above each pilaster. A cast iron swag hangs from each bracket on the east facade. Above the cornice the parapet is adorned with a basket-weave bond. A central pediment holds a cast iron name plate that reads "Yates 1916." The Montana Avenue Street facade is similar in character to the east facade.

While the lower facade of the Yates Building has sustained considerable modification over the years, the upper facade remains largely intact with its original ornament and design elements of the building include brick pilasters, brick detailing, cornice, brackets and finished with the Yates name plate.

South 29th Street

2 South 29th Street

Malin-Yates Building

Contributing

The Malin-Yates Building is a long, rectangular one-story building that extends the entire block between South 29th Street and South 30th Street along the north side of Minnesota Avenue and within the railroad right-of-way. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, warehouses stood at this location, with the Malin-Yates implement company occupying the building from 1912 into the 1930s. The date of construction of this building is unclear but it is visible on a 1949 aerial photograph. Several local informants remember that Lew Chevrolet was at this location after the Second World War. It is presumed that Lew Williams erected the building as a showroom and garage, although this was not his primary place of business.

Situated on the northwest corner of Minnesota and South 29th Street, the building is constructed of brick masonry walls and is covered with a cylindrical vault roof. Glass blocks and brick sill define all window openings except on the primary façade. The façade (east) wall fronts upon South 29th Street. The lower façade is framed with light cream-colored brick and is asymmetrical with a brick wall standing north of center and a glass door entry immediately south of the wall. The façade is otherwise divided into three bays. All bays exhibit small sliding windows and vertical wood panels where presumably large display windows sat. The façade has rounded corners and the colored brick wraps around to frame a small portion of the side walls. The façade is crowned with a rounded parapet that wraps around to the side walls and is capped with brick coping.

Twelve rectangular glass block windows horizontally placed high on the wall below the eaves span both the north and south side walls. All windows have brick sills and almost all display two small symmetrically placed square awning windows. The south wall along Minnesota Avenue holds four large openings unevenly spaced along the wall. The north

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wall is immediately adjacent to the railroad tracks and has a concrete platform to move between the engine and the door entry. The west end walls exhibit a stepped parapet capped with brick coping. It is symmetrical with a centered overhead garage door flanked to each side by horizontal glass block windows.

*21 South 29th Street**Sunset Garage**Contributing*

The Sunset Garage is a one-story commercial building located on the northeast corner of South 29th Street and First Avenue South. The Sunset Garage opened in this building in 1917, boasting a capacity of 65 automobiles with a small repair shop. Historically, the area south of Minnesota Avenue housed numerous livery stables but with the proliferation of the automobile, livery stable became obsolete and replaced with automobile-related businesses, like the Sunset Garage. The Sunset Garage is one of the few remaining garages that reflect this era of transition from horse to automobile.

Built of reinforced concrete, it is clad with a brick veneer. The façade wall faces west onto South 29th Street and is covered with vertical wood plank siding concealing most of the brick façade. The façade features a storefront with a central recessed entry and seven large window openings that vary in width. All have been infilled with wood infill and some feature smaller fixed window panes. The façade is crowned by a parapet wall. A brick pediment covered with plank siding is centered over the south half of the building. The south wall is covered in stucco and features seven square multi-pane steel sash windows evenly spaced across the wall.

*29 South 29th Street**Otis-Kiichli Candy Company**Contributing*

The Otis-Kiichi Candy Company Building is a one and one-half-story commercial brick warehouse situated on the northwest corner of South 29th Street and First Avenue South. The Otis-Kiichli Candy Company, a candy and cigar wholesaler built this building in 1919. However, it doesn't appear the company lasted long at this location, since the city directories show a string of baking companies occupied the building throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1944, the Yellowstone County Trades and Labor Assembly purchased this building and opened their headquarters here late in the year. In 1949, they initiated a comprehensive remodel of the building and constructed the west end addition. Twenty-five unions and four auxiliaries affiliated with the American Federation of Labor utilized the Labor Temple in 1949. The Labor Temple served the unions in Billings until it closed its doors by the turn of the century.

Chandler Cohagen designed the Otis-Kiichli Candy Company building. Mr. Cohagen was one of the most prominent and influential architects in Montana during the first half of the twentieth century. Between 1915 and 1923, he designed four substantial warehouses in downtown Billings, all which exhibit distinctive architectural element characteristics of Cohagen, like dark brown heavy brick construction, brick pilasters and stone/concrete accents.

The primary façade faces east onto South 29th Street. Both the east and south facades facing the street are built of brown running bond brick and feature Art Deco design elements and ornament including linear concrete forms. The east façade is symmetrical in design and six brick pilasters divide the façade into five bays of different widths. The center bay is the widest and features a recessed entry with a heavy concrete surround. Above the entry, the concrete is stamped with three simple geometric reliefs. Above the surround are three rectangular glass blocks evenly spaced within the bay and separated by two small brick pilasters. The flanking bays feature large rectangular window openings with concrete sills placed high on the wall. The inside bay openings have been covered over with plywood while the end bays exhibit six-over-six multi-pane double-hung original windows. Concrete decorative elements are found at the top of the pilasters and with two thick concrete bands wrap the east and south facades.

The south wall of the original building features similar design elements as the east façade. Brick pilasters divide the wall into symmetrically spaced bays of different widths. However, window openings have been altered along this wall. A single story west end addition was added in 1949. The south wall of the addition does not feature pilasters nor is it divided into bays but the concrete bands continue to extend across the wall. There are eight 12-pane windows with concrete sills evenly spaced across the top of the wall and correspond to eight infilled opening at the basement level. The north wall

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exhibits six window openings also high on the wall. A large fading band sign reads "Otis-Kiichli Candy Co. and a second sign below reads "Chocolates, Made in Salt Lake, Sold from Alaska to Australia."

South 30th Street

24 South 30th Street

Crane Company Building

Contributing

The Crane Company Building is a substantial two-story warehouse located on the northwest corner of South 30th Street and First Avenue South. The Crane and Ordway Plumbing Company, a plumbing company based in St. Paul, Minnesota, built this warehouse in 1919 as a satellite wholesale plumbing warehouse. They provided iron pipe and valves, brass valves and fittings, windmills, hot water heaters, radiators and gasoline engines. They occupied the building until the late 1970s.

The building is built of brick with a heavy timber frame. All windows at all level including the daylight basement feature three courses of segmental arched brick heads and brick sill, adding to its symmetry. A 2004-2005 rehabilitation replaced all windows with aluminum-clad divided two-light units.

The building is pronounced its southeast corner where a single bay on each side projects from the face of the building, presenting a tower-like appearance. The bays are separated by wide, brick pilasters at each corner. At the top of the bay is a centered, vertical rectangular panel of basket-weave brick that extends into the parapet where it is raised in the center. The parapet is capped with new sheet metal coping.

The entrance in the east corner bay fronts onto South 30th Street. It holds a replacement metal entry door with a large divided two-light transom above. Above the entry door is a small rectangular painted sign that reads "CRANE CO." The east façade is symmetrical and features four large storefront windows on the lower façade and the upper façade features five windows (one in the east bay). The wall is completed with a wide band of brick painted black that displays four white diamond-shaped decorative elements. Just below the parapet line is a simple dentil brick course.

The south side is similar in character to the east side and symmetrical in its fenestration. There are seven windows (one in the corner bay) evenly spaced across the wall at both the first and second floor levels. The top of the façade also features a wide band of painted brick that reads "CRANE CO." and a simple dentil course of brick below the parapet line. Off the west wall is a large, three-story, windowless egress stair and elevator tower addition clad in a stucco-like product constructed during the 2004-2005 renovation. The north wall is again similar in fenestration to the two other primary facades.

First Avenue South

2921 First Avenue South

Community Gas & Oil Building

Contributing

The Community Gas & Oil Building is a one-story commercial building located on the northeast corner of South 30th Street and First Avenue South and faces First Avenue South. They first occupied this newly constructed building in 1939 on this prominent well-traveled route. The building is characteristic of gas stations that sprung up across the country with the widespread use of the automobile.

The Community Gas & Oil Building exhibits design elements of the Streamline Moderne Style like curved corners, smooth surfaces and vertical decorative detailing. The building is built of reinforced concrete and is painted white. The southwest corner is chamfered and holds three large storefront windows. Large display windows and garage doors span the primary south wall. A wide flat parapet wraps around the building from the east wall to the west wall.

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Building List

ADDRESS	NAME	DATE	ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	DISTRICT STATUS	SITE NUMBER
MINNESOTA AVENUE					
2525 MINNESOTA	BISSINGER & CO HIDES.	1910-1912	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1804
2601 MINNESOTA	HARDWARE WAREHOUSE	1918	Western Commercial	Noncontributing	24YL1805
2605 MINNESOTA	SWIFT & CO. BUILDING	1916	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1806
2611 MINNESOTA	PRICE MOTOR SALES	1948	Modern Quonset	Contributing	24YL1807
2624 MINNESOTA	L&L BUILDING	1893-96	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL0699 listed 2008
2702 MINNESOTA	P.W. MCADOW STORE	1882	False Front	Contributing	24YL1808
2704 MINNESOTA	COVINGTON BUILDING	1893-96 1903-12/1923- 27	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1809
2706-08 MINNESOTA	STANDARD BUILDING	1896-03	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1810
2710-1/2 MINNESOTA	M. HENIHAN CIGARS	1891-96	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1811
2712 MINNESOTA	WESTERN BAR	1952	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1812
2714 MINNESOTA	WHEEL BAR	1898-03	Western Commercial	Noncontributing	24YL1813
2716 MINNESOTA	GLOBE THEATER & HOTEL	1900-03	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1814
2718 MINNESOTA	CRYSTAL BAR	1893	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1815
2720 MINNESOTA	YUKON BAR	1890-00	Modern	Contributing	24YL1816
2804 MINNESOTA	YEGEN BLOCK	1950/1957	Modern	Noncontributing	24YL1817
2822 MINNESOTA	MONTANA RESCUE MISSION	1900	Non-descript	Contributing	24YL1818
2902 MINNESOTA	SILVER DOLLAR INN HOUGE-ROBINSON & CO. BUILDING	1900	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1819
2910 MINNESOTA	HANCHETT AND SONS FURNITURE	1952	Modern	Noncontributing	24YL1820
2912 MINNESOTA	KIRK'S GROCERY	1910-12	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1821
2920 MINNESOTA	BIG 4 STORE	1912-13	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL0640
2922 MINNESOTA	DAVE'S GARAGE	1953	Modern	Contributing	24YL1822
2924 MINNESOTA				Noncontributing	24YL1823
MONTANA AVENUE					
2702 MONTANA	OLIVER BUILDING	1910/30	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL0700 listed 2008
2718 MONTANA	SELVIDGE-BABCOCK BUILDING	1914	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1836
2802 MONTANA	BILLINGS HARDWARE	1909	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1837
2815 MONTANA	COLONIAL CAFÉ	1886	Modern	Noncontributing	24YL1839
2817-19 MONTANA	LOSEKAMP BLOCK	1910-12	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1840
2822 MONTANA	PARMLY BILLINGS LIBRARY	1901	Richardson Romanesque	Contributing	24YL0075 listed 1972
2822 MONTANA	RALSTON CABIN	1948	Log	Noncontributing	24YL1838
2902 MONTANA	NORTERN PACIFICRR FREIGHT HOUSE	1948	Modern	Contributing	24YL1841
2905-07 MONTANA	AMERICAN DRY CLEANERS	1920	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1842
2909-11 MONTANA	CONNOLLY SADDLERY	1919/42	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1843
2919 MONTANA	BILLINGS TIMES	1907	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1844
2921 MONTANA	SERVICE CANDY CO.	1937	Art Deco	Contributing	24YL1845
2923 MONTANA	POUDER FURNITURE	1916	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1846
STREETS					
10 S. 26TH STREET	MAPLE LEAF CLUB	1904-12	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1824
14 S. 27TH STREET	GLEN APARTMENTS	1930-33	Art Deco	Contributing	24YL1825
18 S. 27TH STREET	SAFeway BUILDING	1942	Art Deco	Contributing	24YL1826

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1 SOUTH BROADWAY	ARMOUR BUILDING	1918	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1583 listed 2004
2 SOUTH BROADWAY	RYAN GROCERY WAREHOUSE	1920	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1827
19 S. 28TH STREET	REX LAUNDRY	1919	Modern	Noncontributing	24YL1828
20 S.28TH STREET	INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER	1919	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1829
4 N. 29TH STREET	YATES BUILDING	1916	Art Deco	Contributing	24YL1830
2 S. 29TH STREET	MALIN-YATES BUILDING	c. 1945	Modern	Contributing	24YL1831
21 S. 29TH STREET	SUNSET GARAGE	1917	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1832
29 S. 29TH STREET	OTIS-KIICHLI CANDY COMPANY	1919	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1833
24 S. 30TH STREET	CRANE CO. BUILDING	1919	Western Commercial	Contributing	24YL1834
2921 1ST AVENUE S.	COMMUNITY GAS & OIL BUILDING	1939	Streamline Moderne	Contributing	24YL1835

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The Billings Old Town Historic District represents the importance of the railroad network for downtown Billings to develop as a thriving commercial center whose commercial development depended on the presence of the railroad. The commercial development depended on the presence of the railroad, as warehouses, equipment dealers, hotels, restaurants, even saloons and prostitution aligned themselves with the railroad through the downtown area.

The Billings Old Town Historic District is significant under National Register Criteria C for its representation of the evolution of the built environment of downtown Billings on the north and south side of the railroad corridor. The Billings Old Town Historic District features an eclectic mix of architecture dating from nearly each decade in the city's history. While various architectural styles are in evidence, the majority represent the Western Commercial style, which combines diverse and stylistic elements. Examples of vernacular warehouse architecture are also prevalent. The Billings Old Town Historic District also derives significance by representing the designs of three of Montana's prominent architects, Charles S. Haire, John G. Link and Chandler C. Cohagen. Haire designed the Richardson Romanesque Parmlly Billings Library. Link designed several warehouses plus a 1940s Safeway store within the district. Chandler Cohagen designs, both for new or remodeled buildings, range from warehouses to small commercial buildings.

Historic Context

In 1998, the Yellowstone County Historic Preservation Board of the City of Billings, MT and the Western Heritage Center of Billings MT sponsored a downtown Billings Architectural and Historic Survey, funded in part by the City of Billings Tax Increment Program. Chere Jiusto conducted an inventory of 20 downtown buildings and compiled an historic overview of downtown Billings. This overview is used by permission of the Yellowstone County Historic Preservation Board and the Western Heritage Center. The author of this nomination revised the footnotes.²

Archaeological evidence indicates that early native peoples have visited this Yellowstone River region in the vicinity of Billings for over 10,000 years. Joseph Medicine Crow, the renowned Crow historian, believes the Crow were the first of the modern tribes to come to the rimrocks above present-day Billings and regard that place as a main part of the Crow Country.³ The Yellowstone Valley served as home to the Crow for many centuries, while numerous other tribes camped and hunted here. The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 gave much of the Yellowstone River Basin west of the Powder River to the Crow Tribe. The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 reduced Crow Reservation boundaries by removing all lands north (thereby including the Clark's Fork Bottom) and west of the Yellowstone River.⁴

Birth of Billings

Billings is situated on the north bank of the Yellowstone River, at a point on the Northern Pacific railroad 915 miles west of St. Paul and about midway between that city and the terminus of the road at Puget sound. The town is located upon a gently sloping plain at the eastern extremity of the most beautiful of Montana valleys - the Clark Fork bottom - north of the town a line of rugged cliffs, the bank of a once wide Yellowstone, divides the bottom lands along the river from a higher plateau.⁵

Born in 1882, the city of Billings was a rail hub founded by the Northern Pacific Railroad within the Clark's Fork Bottom of the Yellowstone. The location was steered by a plan to develop freight hauling up Alkali Creek to Ft. Benton and beyond into the productive Judith and Musselshell Basins. Still, this inauspicious spot, three miles from fresh water on the alkali flats above the Yellowstone River may not, at a first glance, seem the most desirable location to start a town.

² In order to present the historical development of downtown Billings, numerous buildings outside the Billings Old Town Historic District are mentioned. To avoid confusion, all buildings discussed in the historic context that are within the Billings Old Town Historic District will be identified as such.

³ Joseph Medicine Crow, interview with Mardell Plainfeather, June 27, 2006, Lodge Grass, MT.

⁴ Crow Treaties and agreements are available in Charles J. Kappler, compiled and edited, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* 2 vols. (Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office (GPO), 1904; <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/>).

⁵ *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, November 19, 1888.

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Nearby Coulson, five years old and perched on the river's edge just to the northeast, appeared a far more likely site. Settlers moving east from the Gallatin Valley had farmed the flats around Coulson since 1877, and rejoiced at the news that the railroad was coming their way. In the end, though, Clark's Fork Bottom edged out Coulson, to the great disappointment of those living in the settlement.

The reason lies in a twist of geography. During westward expansion, railroads were given financial support by the U.S. government to build through the remote territories. When the Northern Pacific charter was drawn up, the company was granted lands along their route in a checkerboard pattern (an unprecedented forty sections to the mile in Montana, the Dakotas and Idaho). Every other section along the line became railroad land alternating with property held by the federal government to be claimed or sold to the general public. When the United States Government Land Office surveyed the Yellowstone Basin, this pattern was interrupted. At a spot where two townships lined out, by coincidence two sections of railroad land "lay side by side, instead of cornering together as they did elsewhere."⁶ With equal amounts of land to either side, the railroad stood to make a hefty profit from land sales to hopeful settlers. Shrewd Northern Pacific officials were able to double normal profits by siting a town across a plot of ground twice as large as what the railroad normally could own. The rail line was run close to the township lines at the exact center of the platted town, and Billings, named for past Northern Pacific Railroad president Frederick Billings, was born. Coulson residents' dreams of being the next "Denver of the Prairie" faded like the sound of a train whistle blowing out of town.

In an arrangement common during the era of railroad construction, capitalists linked to the Northern Pacific Railroad Company controlled and profited on townsite development. At Clark's Fork Bottom, Northern Pacific conveyed two sections of land to the Montana and Minnesota Land & Improvement Company (M&MLI). In turn M&MLI established the Billings Townsite Company, to lay out a town and sell off town lots. Not surprisingly, the largest stockholders and incorporators of M&MLI were Heman Clark (general contractor for the Northern Pacific president, Frederick Billings (former Northern Pacific president), and Thomas Oakes (Northern Pacific vice-president). Clark also became the first president of the Billings Townsite Company.⁷

Billings railroad ancestry is seen in its townsite configuration. Unlike mining towns of the region whose contours traced the haphazard routes of streambeds and ore bodies, railroad towns were orderly geometric affairs. Laid out on rectilinear grids, the rail lines formed the spine of the townsite, with streets for businesses and homes projecting away at right angles. Billings' layout copied those of Bismarck and Jamestown, ND.⁸ However, taking advantage of the unique way that Billings straddled two sections, Clark platted the town to include two main commercial streets, paralleling and fronting onto the rail line. These twin streets, named Montana and Minnesota for the mother company that gave them life, formed the commercial center of the new town.

On April 1, 1882, Heman Clark arrived at Billings. Detailing the creation of the Billings townsite, what he described was basically an instant city planned to hold 20,000 inhabitants. Eight or nine sawmills, a 16-mile irrigation system, rail spurs to nearby mines and money for the first bank in town came with the package.⁹ The railroad's promise to pump massive capital into the town "lit the fuse of a crazed land boom"¹⁰, and when M&MLI agent G. B. Hulme joined Clark the following week, the land rush was on. Hopes ran high and speculation was rampant. By June 1, the burgeoning population was estimated at 500, yet almost six times that number, 2900, reportedly vied to purchase town properties, to the great frustration of locals. Lots that first sold for \$150-\$250 almost overnight resold for tenfold that amount. Meanwhile, other

⁶ Memoirs of H.W. Rowley, *Billings Gazette*, May 7, 1933.

⁷ Carroll Van West, *Capitalism on the Frontier, Billings & the Yellowstone Valley in the 19th Century*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 120-121.

⁸ Ibid, 122; for a discussion on Northern Pacific town-building, see John Hudson, "Main Streets of the Yellowstone Valley: Town-Building along the Northern Pacific in Montana," *Montana, the Magazine of Western History* 35 No. 4 (Autumn 1985): 56-67.

⁹ Waldo O. Kliever, "The Foundations of Billings, Montana." *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 31 (July 1940): 259.

¹⁰ Van West, *Capitalism on the Frontier*, 180.

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lots were rented for \$50/month to business owners who operated out of hastily thrown up tents.¹¹ Skirting the townsite, real estate investors who had the jump on most ordinary buyers (Frederick Billings held the lion's share), bought up sections like hotcakes. Some, such as Foster and P.W. McAdow platted their own additions to the community. These lots immediately went on the market; in many cases selling ahead of the railroad's own lots.¹²

Meanwhile, work on the approaching Northern Pacific line continued at breakneck pace. Henry Villard, then president of the Northern Pacific, was pushing hard for the transcontinental connection. While rail crews built east from Portland, others continued west up the Yellowstone valley. In August 1882, the line was completed to Billings, and on September 8, 1883, spike-driving celebrations at Gold Creek, Montana forged the final link in the Northern Pacific's chain across the continent.

Building the New Town

By May 1882, there were three buildings on the spot destined to become Billings. They were headquarters to lodge railroad survey crews, H. Clark's townsite office and mercantile, and a lone residence.¹³ Immediately, the building of town began. Many of the first structures were tents that sheltered hustling new businesses and town residents. Alongside them, cabins of rough-hewn log sprouted in about equal numbers and rapidly replaced the tents. By mid-June of the first year, 79 tent shelters were in use, 81 houses were complete and another 75 homes were underway.¹⁴ Buildings to house new arrivals were hastily constructed south of the tracks, while commercial buildings and hotels were planted close to the hub of railroad activities. To keep order in the midst of the flurry, it was decreed that all dwellings be kept off the middle of streets.¹⁵

In September 1882, E.V. Smalley reported in the Century Magazine that:

The new town, when I visited it, consisted of perhaps 50 cheap structures scattered over a square mile of bottom land...Many people were living in little A tents or in their canvas-covered wagons, waiting for lumber to arrive with which to build houses.¹⁶

When it could be gotten, milled lumber was used, garnered at first from a sawmill in Coulson or shipped in 20 miles from the west. Lumber was costly though, so in Billings, as in thousands of frontier towns across the western territories, many original buildings were constructed of log. Frugal merchants striving to achieve a look of permanency applied false lumber fronts to their businesses, typical in western towns.

Sources of brick and stone were also developed by late that first year. Equipment for the Heffner Stone Quarry arrived at Coulson in 1882, one step ahead of Billings' townsite developers. Up in the shadow of the rims, Heffner Stone workers were soon sawing out giant blocks of sandstone for foundations and walls of the town's more permanent buildings. Meanwhile, two brickyards opened on the outskirts of town.¹⁷

¹¹ Myrtle Cooper, *From Tent Town to City: A Chronological History of Billings, Montana, 1882-1935*, (Billings, Privately Published, 1981), 2-3; Kliwer, "Foundations of Billings," 262.

¹² Yellowstone County Deed Records, Office of Clerk and Recorder, Yellowstone County Courthouse, Billings, MT.

¹³ Hendry & Fell, *Residence and Business Directory of Billings, Montana*, (Minneapolis: Reynolds & Hammond, Printers, 1883); *An Illustrated History of the Yellowstone Valley*, (Spokane: Western Historical Publishing Company, 1907), 292.

¹⁴ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 4.

¹⁵ Van West, *Capitalism on the Frontier*, 134.

¹⁶ E.V. Smalley, "The New Northwest," *Century Magazine* 24 (September 1882), 770-72.

¹⁷ "Billings Quarry-William Heffner, Yellowstone Genealogy Forum at www.rootsweb.com/mtygf/county/quarry.htm (accessed July 6, 2005); Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 8.

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C.W. Horr reportedly erected the first brick building in 1882; and the town's first sturdy business block was constructed in June 1883. Built of brick, the building was the first in town to feature a plate glass storefront. Boston investor Captain Henry Belknap, who also held ranching interests in Wyoming, financed the Belknap Block.¹⁸

Streets of the new town "were unpaved, sidewalks were but mere paths beaten down by human footprints, and oil lamps in glass enclosures on corner posts was the municipal lighting system of the time."¹⁹ Lining the streets were modest tents, shacks and buildings. Beyond the Montana-Minnesota business corridor, one rapidly moved into the residential areas, where small gable-roofed houses of log and wood quickly became home to the growing community.

The building boom continued, and by the end of 1883, the newspaper reported some 400 buildings, occupied by over 1500 citizens.²⁰ Maps of the day reveal that downtown encompassed about a nine-block area, split about evenly north and south of the railroad tracks. However, on the south the buildings were all of wood frame construction, while to the north, brick buildings were already beginning to edge out first generation frame buildings. Beyond downtown, the area south of the tracks became the first large residential neighborhood.

On November 19, 1888, a visiting reporter described Billings' progress through her first half decade.

In January 1882, Billings was a bright prairie. Today it is a sprightly, live, energetic and aggressive town of 1,500 inhabitants. It has certain metropolitan characteristics such as a splendid system of water works, electric lights, graded streets, efficient fire department, excellent schools and churches, good society, an intelligent class of people, wide awake and quick to respond to any demands upon their purses in the interest of the community.²¹

The future of the town depended on growth, and the railroad and business community promoted the young city at every turn. Billings' population was reported frequently, in articles and pronouncements intended to draw settlers. The official U.S. Census tally of residents made in 1890 showed the population faltering at 836, but slowly number crept up and ten years later, the census counted 3,221. Despite high hopes, Billings' economy was slow to ignite, slow to draw major investors and large industry.

Toward the century's turn, the population spread into the flats north of the downtown and the north side neighborhood became increasingly attractive. Homes of prominent citizens such as A.L. Babcock, David & Kate Fratt, and Charles M. Bair (whose home at 3rd & Broadway was known as "one of the finest in Billings" in its day) helped to anchor the neighborhood. These were frame and sometimes brick homes, scattered in the blocks north of the tracks.

Transportation

The first train rolled into the city August 22, 1882 and from that day forward, reaching the town was relatively easy. In the comfort of a Northern Pacific coach, one could travel from St. Paul to Billings in a few days. Completion of the railroad marked the demise of other means of transportation, which took longer and were far more arduous. By steamboat the closest one could get on the Yellowstone was Huntley, about 15 miles down river to the east. And for a time, daily coach connections ran from Fort Benton on the Missouri River, 200 miles away. However, the days of steamboat travel were ending by the time Billings was born. The third alternative, an overland journey, took weeks or months.

¹⁸ Van West, *Capitalism on the Frontier*, 140; Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 13.

¹⁹ Miss Clara B. Howard, Interview by Irving Wyatt, *Billings Gazette*, n.d., Billings Scrapbook, Parmly Billings Library, Billings, MT.

²⁰ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 15.

²¹ *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, November 19, 1888.

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Because the railroad company judged the first depot in town inadequate, passengers en route to Billings disembarked at the Headquarters Hotel. This hotel, built to lodge Northern Pacific field engineering crews, was enlarged and moved trackside at the foot of North 28th Street and Montana Avenue in October 1882 to serve as a temporary depot. At the end of that first year, its doors were thrown open to the public and two other hotels - the International and the Park - were completed and accepting lodgers.²² One of the early arrivals, Mrs. T.W. Polly remembered that "it was the custom to shoot up the town for arriving 'pilgrims'. Cowboys, drinking and shouting, riding full gallop in slush and mud, did all they could to act wild."²³

Nearby, an express freight depot and office were built at 26th Street and Minnesota Avenue. The railroad served as a point of departure as well, particularly for livestock and agricultural goods from outlying ranchlands and farms. In the late summer of 1882, the Floweree & Lowry Cattle Co. trailed 2000 head of sheep from central Montana, to the railhead at Billings. This first shipment of sheep rolled out of Billings in September that year, marking the city's future as one of North America's primary rail shipping points for sheep.²⁴

Billings was the economic hub for an enormous region. Early on, "all northern Wyoming depended on Billings for merchandise. Heavy wagons, with 18-20 horses, freighted to Wyoming, Judith basin and Lewistown. Pack strings and ox teams also transported needs of neighboring communities."²⁵ And indeed, much of the economy of Eastern Montana and Northern Wyoming revolved around the Billings market.

In town, liveryes and blacksmiths serviced carriages of the day. Cothron & Todd, at 1st Avenue and 28th Street North, was one of the first liveryes in town. The Dark Horse Livery was located for many years on Billings' South Side.²⁶

Between Billings and Coulson a small street railway was established. The first car, horse-drawn and 10' long, made the trip on May 23, 1883, making it the first in Montana. The line was recreational and figured prominently in the plans of manager John J. Alderson's and company officer P.W. McAdow's scheme to sell swamp land along the route. They touted the line as a connection between the McAdow and Alderson Additions to Billings proper. Operating between 8:00 a.m. and 10:15 p.m. the schedule between towns was reportedly somewhat erratic but the line was initially popular - in part due to the free beer at the Coulson end of the line, next door at Ash & Booth's Brewery. Coulson promoters clung to the hope that the street railway would keep that town alive. However, it also carried shoppers from dwindling Coulson into bustling Billings. And when even the free beer couldn't keep the streetcar line from folding in early 1885, the hopes for Coulson's future and land sales faded.²⁷

On March 3, 1891, Congress ratified a treaty with the Crow Nation that opened lands in the Clark's Fork and Pryor Creek valleys to settlement by whites. The following January, these lands were added to Yellowstone County. In 1893, the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad secured a right of way from Sheridan, Wyoming across the Crow Reservation. The arrival of the Burlington line into Billings in October 1894 immediately established Billings as a western transportation center. The move connected the Burlington to the Northern Pacific line, breathing new life into the faltering NORTHERN PACIFIC line by connecting it through Billings to Denver, Kansas City and St. Louis. The consolidation of the railroads anchored the business of town down to bedrock. And it ushered in an era of business growth and the bright future Billings' boosters had been promising.²⁸

²² Van West, *Capitalism on the Frontier*, 128, 152-53; Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 8, Joyce Jensen, *Pieces & Places of Billings History Local Markers and Sites*, (Billings, MT: Western Heritage Center, 1994), 52-53.

²³ "Pilgrims First Impressions of Town Terrified," *Landmarks* 2 (August 1975), 14.

²⁴ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 6; by the end of 1883, over 600,000 pounds of wool and 20,000 head of cattle had been shipped out of Billings on the Northern Pacific Railroad, Van West, *Capitalism on the Frontier*, 144.

²⁵ *Billings Gazette*, n.d., Billings Scrapbooks, Parmly Billings Library, Billings, MT.

²⁶ *Billings Gazette*, August 24, 1947.

²⁷ *Billings Gazette*, January 3, 1937;

²⁸ The importance of the arrival of the Burlington is discussed in Van West, *Capitalism on the Frontier*, 193-98; 200-202; see also Carroll Van West, "Good Times, Bad Times." in *Stories from an Open Country*, ed. William L. Lang (Billings, MT: Western Heritage Center, 1995), 115-118.

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Farming and Ranching

In September 1883, Frederick Billings, NORTERN PACIFIC president Henry Villard, and former US President Ulysses S. Grant stopped over in the year-old city of Billings en route to drive the golden spike at Gold Creek. There they were greeted by displays of local crops, livestock and minerals, along with the Fort Custer U.S. Army band.²⁹

Livestock reigned in the young Billings economy and was a lynchpin industry in the Montana Territory. At the full swing of the open-range cattle era, Billings sat dead center in a tremendous inland cattle empire. Mild winters in the early 1880s enabled large ranches of central Montana to fatten thousands of head of livestock. The new railhead in Billings gave them a gateway to eastern markets. The first year alone, nearly 20,000 cattle were shipped out of Billings.³⁰ After cattlemen took a hard pounding through the winter of 1886-87, however, sheep growing increased and soon millions of pounds of wool — up to 13,000,000 pounds through 1910 — was leaving Billings annually.³¹

The first large experimental farm near Billings was established by Congregational minister B.F. Shuart, acting secretly as an agent for Frederick Billings. Shuart bought up small homestead farms in the valley, creating the 620-acre Hesper Ranch. With butter and milk a scarcity, Shuart planned a dairy and was first to market butter in the area. The farm was also first to plant alfalfa, and to raise sheep on this feed.³²

Dairy farming on a larger scale made a slow start. Most families kept their own milk cows, and for several years cow herders would gather up the cows each day and drive them out to pasture. In April 1887, T.C. Armitage shipped in a railroad car filled with Holsteins and started the area's first full-scale dairy farm.³³

Shuart's relations with Billings soured and in May 1892, management of the ranch turned over to M&MLI official, I.D. O'Donnell. O'Donnell had broad ranching experience, and had worked for E.G. Bailey (Frederick Billings' nephew) prior to his Billings career. Bailey and O'Donnell were recruited to build Hesper into the showcase farm of the Billings' vicinity. They set about the task, raising hay, grain, vegetables, apples, sheep and cattle. O'Donnell, who bought out Bailey's interest in the farm a few years later, was the mastermind behind the beginning of Billings' sugar beet industry in the early 1900s.³⁴

Industry

Areas south and northwest of Billings held rich metal ores, and attracted miners and investors. By early January 1883, 90,000 pounds of silver bullion from mining districts in the Judith and White Sulphur areas had passed through Billings by rail. That summer, another 200,000 pounds came from the Cooke City mines.³⁵ In addition, coal reserves in the Bull Mountains and the Clark's Fork valley drew investors who pushed for a branch rail connection to Billings. By 1887, the promising Red Lodge coalfields were linked to Billings via the Rocky Fork and Cooke City Railroad.

Manufacturing for the building trades continued apace. With a stone quarry, brickyards, foundry and two lumber mills there was a steady supply for the growing town. Thanks to the railroad, these manufacturers could also ship their materials to other towns on the line. JR Hathaway's Montana Lumber Co. boasted it was "the largest ... between Fargo,

²⁹ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 14.

³⁰ Kliewer, "Foundations of Billings, MT," 267.

³¹ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 25.

³² See Van West, *Capitalism on the Frontier*, 146-169 for an understanding of the relationship between Frederick Billings and Benjamin F. Shuart.

³³ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 23.

³⁴ Van West in his *Capitalism on the Frontier* lists I.D. O'Donnell as one of three entrepreneurs' influential to the future of Billings; see Van West, 169-71, 177, 192-93, 202, 208-9

³⁵ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 9, 13.

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North Dakota and the Pacific Ocean.³⁶ And manufactured building materials from other places could reach the Billings market.

The processing of agricultural products was also established. Hulking warehouses and factories for wool scouring, meat processing, tanneries, stock shipping and flour milling all sprang up close to the railroad tracks.

Culture & Entertainment

Dance houses and gambling saloons threw open their doors on Billings' main streets. At first recorded count in 1883, there were 11 saloons and 3 billiard halls on the main strips.³⁷ Beyond these bawdy amusements members of the emerging community sought to cultivate other forms of entertainment. The first theatrical production was staged in July 1882, by the Boston Comic Opera. The opera troupe rode in on the mail stage to perform in a makeshift theater lit by "kerosene lamps and a fair sprinkling of tallow dips". An enthusiastic crowd sat on borrowed chairs and planks in an unfinished saloon.³⁸

Other diversions that year included Mel Powers' Variety Theater advertising "A Galaxy of Stars", the Billings Social Club's first dance and the following June, Dan Costello's circus came to town. From December 1883 until it burned in 1885, the Myers Block on Montana Ave. housed an entertainment hall that doubled as a roller skating rink.³⁹

On February 3, 1896, A.L. Babcock opened the Billings Opera House on Montana between 25th and 26th Streets. The sumptuous theater seated 800, and brought high caliber performers to the city. Performers like Maude Adams, May Sargeant, John Griffith and Madam Helena Modjeska, all widely known in their day, were among those in the bright lights of the Opera House stage.

Prostitution was an inevitable part of Billings' society during the early years. "Social clubs" and "sporting houses" flourished near the rail yards, and were frequented by rail workers, cow hands, and undoubtedly, a wide cross section of other gentlemen. Early Sanborn maps of Billings unabashedly labeled a solid lineup of "female boarding houses" along a 2½-block stretch of Minnesota Avenue, located east of the historic district boundary.⁴⁰

There were many memorable women in the trade. Kit Rumley was reportedly the town's "first lady of the night". Ollie Warren, owner of the Lucky Diamond sporting house, was one of the best known. She also ran cattle in Wyoming, and was proprietor of Billings' Virginia Hotel. But Ollie was best remembered for her flamboyant 4-horse coach and flashy sidesaddle rides through town.⁴¹

Education

The first school classes began in October 1882 and were held in makeshift rented spaces. A log school building, completed on First Ave N, between 24th and 26th Streets opened to students in September of 1883. The following summer a school board was elected, and School District #2 was created. The first permanent school building - North School -- was built on land donated by MML&I on 4th Avenue between 29th and 30th Streets. With a \$4,000 donation from Frederick Billings, the school officially opened in February 1886.⁴²

³⁶ R.L. Polk, *Billings Business Directory and Gazetteer*, 1901.

³⁷ Hendry & Fell, *Directory of Billings* 1883.

³⁸ *Billings Gazette*, n.d., Billings Scrapbooks, 18-19, Parmly Billings Library, Billings, MT.

³⁹ Kliewer, "Foundations of Billings," 277; Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 8. 15.

⁴⁰ Sanborn maps 1896, 1903. Sanborn maps are available at <http://sanborn.umi.com>

⁴¹ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 33.

⁴² Karen D. Stevens and Dee Ann Redman, *Billings A to Z*, (Billings, MT: Fenske Companies, 2000), 94.

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Meanwhile across the tracks, the South School was located at S 29th St and First Ave South (south of the historic district). Completed and opened in February 1893, it served the large residential neighborhood on the south side of town. South School was a brick building similar to its northern sister across the tracks.⁴³

A library association was founded in 1882, and a reading room opened with several magazine subscriptions provided by Heman Clark. The first winter witnessed the formation of a local literary society, which hosted musicals, readings and spelling bees. In October 1901, the Parmly Billings Memorial Library, at 2822 Montana Avenue and within the Old Town Historic District, was dedicated on land leased to the city for \$1 per year. A civic gift from Frederick Billings, Jr., the library is a lasting memorial to his brother Parmly who died of sudden illness in 1888 at age 25.⁴⁴

Government

The Montana Territorial Legislature created Yellowstone County in January 1883, and on January 24 Billings became the official county seat. On March 3, 1883 the first county commissioners met. After several failed attempts, Billings' voters approved a city charter in April 1885 and incorporated the town. The first City Hall and firehouse was built on Minnesota and the northwest corner of S 27th St. In the 1890s, City Hall was located on the west side of Broadway and included a fire station. And in April 1903, Billings' new city hall and fire station was dedicated at N 28th St and 1st Ave North.⁴⁵

The local court was held first on N 26th St half a block off Montana Avenue. The building burned in 1885 and a brick courthouse was erected on N 27th St and 1st Ave North. In 1903, voters approved a new courthouse and jail, and it was constructed two years later in the 200 block of 27th at a cost of \$125,000.⁴⁶

Clubs & Organizations

Boosting Billings was high on the list of priorities in the early days and a series of business groups was organized in the city. Expanding the road base to Billings' outlying market areas and luring desirable businesses to town were among the shared goals. In November 1882, the first Citizen's Committee formed to raise money to build a road to connect ranchers and miners in the central Montana region to the Billings hub. This was followed by a Board of Trade in March 1883 "to facilitate and promote the business interests and general welfare of Billings."⁴⁷ They championed improved rail and road connections, particularly north to the stock raisers in the Musselshell. Through the first decade the business community promoted and contributed substantially to road and bridge building efforts, in hopes of expanding their trade.

A number of fraternal organizations also held meetings in town. The BPOE Elks lodge #394 was founded in December 1897 with A.L. Babcock the first Exalted Ruler. The Masons Ashlar Lodge #29 at Billings, organized in July 1883 and met for years on the second floor of the Belknap Block.⁴⁸

⁴³ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 28.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 9, 36.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 19; 38; Sanborn Maps "Billings, MT," 1882-1903.

⁴⁶ Sanborn Maps "Billings, MT," 1882-1903; Cooper, *Tent Town to City*, 38, 41.

⁴⁷ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 8; Van West, *Capitalism on the Frontier*, 147-48; these groups are predecessors to the Billings' Chamber of Commerce, who promoted Billings in all endeavors.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 13, 33.

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Postal Delivery & Newspapers

News traveled rapidly to the burgeoning community of Billings, via postal delivery and newspapers. The first postal deliveries to town were routed through Coulson, for although Billings Post Office opened June 13, 1882, service there did not begin for two months. The Billings Post Office was initially located in a false-front building on Minnesota, then moved directly across from the railroad depot on Montana Avenue. In later years it moved to the rear of the First National Bank Building, to the Losekamp Block and to the 200 block of Broadway.⁴⁹

In April 1882, the five-year-old Coulson Post renamed itself the Billings-Coulson Post in anticipation of the new townsite. Republican in its leanings, it was founded by Abel Yerkes, the so-called "Poet of Sour Dough Creek." The Post moved to Billings after a rival newspaper- the Billings Herald - set up shop in the townsite and offered up the Democratic view of the news. Presses at a third newspaper, the Daily Rustler, began to roll in November of 1884. In the spring of 1885, all three papers consolidated under the Gazette Publishing Co., the very day of a raging fire that destroyed their headquarters along with much of downtown.⁵⁰

Finance

Billings' "First Bank" was organized in May 1882 by Stebbins, Post and Mund. H.H. Mund, bank manager, became one of Billings' most prominent boosters. In 1884, Stebbins and Mund reorganized as the First National Bank, and that November, they moved into a permanent stone-and-brick building. In January 1896, P.B. Moss was elected president of the bank.⁵¹

In May 1886, Billings' second bank, the Bailey and Billings Bank, was formed by Parmly Billings and cousin, Edward G. Bailey with financial backing from Frederick Billings, Sr. Colonel A.L. Babcock reorganized that bank as the Yellowstone National Bank in April 1891. In 1900, the Yegen Brothers opened the first savings bank in Billings, located in the Yegen Block within the Billings Old Town Historic District.⁵²

Services

Water was one of the most urgent needs in the young town. The townsite on Clark's Bottom was three miles up and away from the Yellowstone River and for the first years, drinking water was available by delivery only, pay as you go for 25 or 50 cents a barrel. Several proposals were raised for well digging, and in 1883, the Montana Artesian Well Company drilled a dry well to a depth of nearly 900 feet before going belly up. During the summer of 1886, the shortage of fresh water was resolved, when the Billings Water Power Co. completed a canal and water works on the Yellowstone, which pumped a million gallons of water daily into the city.⁵³

Meanwhile, the Billings Land and Irrigation Company began construction in 1882 on a "Big Ditch" for irrigation in town and the surrounding farmlands. Head engineer H.W. Rowley planned a system with nine wooden flumes and five drops. The first water trickled into the ditch in July of 1883. In the years that followed, the irrigation system was greatly expanded to water thirsty area farms. By 1894, Northwest Magazine reported 278 miles of canals with lateral ditches adding hundreds of miles more. And when area farmers purchased the canal in 1900 with backing from P.B. Moss, it wound through farmlands from 10 miles below Park City to the Billings city limits.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ *Billings Gazette*, January 13, 1942.

⁵⁰ *Billings Gazette*, n.d., Billings Scrapbook, 92, Parmly Billings Library, Billings, MT.

⁵¹ Stevens and Redman, *Billings A to Z*, 15.

⁵² *Ibid*, 16.

⁵³ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 22.

⁵⁴ *Billings Gazette*, n.d., Billings Scrapbook, 168, Parmly Billings Library, Billings, MT.

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Billings Water Power Co. switched on electric lighting in town in 1887. The city's first telephone system (under discussion since 1884) came on line in October 1890. It operated under various names including Independent Telephone Co and Automatic Telephone Exchange (owners E.B. Hungerford, A.L. Babcock & Charles Spear) until 1914, when it sold to Mountain States Telephone & Telegraph. At the turn of the century, when a long distance exchange opened to Big Timber, Livingston, Bozeman and Butte there were some 200 subscribers.⁵⁵

Fires and Floods

Fires were a constant danger in frontier towns. Log buildings, wood stoves and oil lamps (often given to exploding) led to frequent blazes. Buckets and axes were a poor match for the fires that routinely consumed large numbers of buildings. In 1883, Billings' first school buildings burned while the new brick school was under construction. The following July, the entire block (110) fronting Montana Avenue between 26th-27th Streets in the heart of downtown burned to the ground. On May 3, 1885, a fire broke out in the Farmer's Hotel and razed most of the 2500 block (111) along the north side of Montana, a dozen buildings including the offices of the Billings Gazette. Two months later, block 110 again went up in smoke.⁵⁶

Following these blazes, fire companies were organized, and locals promoted building with fire resistant materials. Still smarting from their losses, the Billings Gazette championed the cause of better fire protection for the city. Yet in 1891, the town's first hotel, the Headquarters Hotel on 28th Street North and Montana, burned along with the old depot and telegraph office. The blaze gave opportunity for the extension of 28th Street, which was renamed Broadway.⁵⁷

Spring thaws in a number of years turned the streets of Billings into a muddy quagmire, "too deep to wade and hardly enough to swim."⁵⁸ Thawing garbage and livestock carcasses turned into a health hazard. At the end of the hard winter of 1886-87, warm chinook winds sent sheets of water washing through town. Wooden sidewalks floated off their moorings, and the flooding was so deep that many businesses and homes at the center of town were inundated giving many in town "a decidedly humid outlook."⁵⁹

Early Businesses

After the railroad and the land office, many of the earliest businesses in Billings were those that moved lock, stock and barrel from the nearby town of Coulson. Among these were the Coulson Post, Yellowstone (formerly Coulson) Bottling Works and P.W. McAdow's General Store. McAdow & Covely opened a store at Minnesota and 27th Street to vie with that of Heman Clark just up the street. These major businesses helped anchor Minnesota Avenue in the fledgling downtown. An early fire damaged McAdow & Covely, on what became known as McAdow's Corner. It was repaired some years later and the same footprint still stands today, reportedly one of the earliest buildings in downtown Billings and within the Billings Old Town Historic District.⁶⁰

Yegen Brothers began their business empire in a small store and bakery in 1882. The business failed after the rail workers moved on, but they started anew and by 1885, their business had regrown. Occupying almost the entire 2800 block on Minnesota Ave by 1900, the Yegens expanded to include wholesale groceries, dry goods, hardware, furniture and farm implements. Within the Billings Old Town Historic District, these buildings still stand but in altered states.

While some entrepreneurs opened their businesses to the citizens of Billings, others shipped their goods out from Billings into the hinterlands. Heman Clark freighted merchandise from Billings northwest into the Judith Basin of central Montana,

⁵⁵ History of Yellowstone County, 300, 302; Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 23, 25, 37.

⁵⁶ *Billings Gazette*, May 3, 1885, June 28, 1930.

⁵⁷ Carroll Van West, *Images of Billings A Photographic History*, (Billings: Western Heritage Center, 1990), 18.

⁵⁸ Kliever, *Foundations of Billings*, 274.

⁵⁹ *Billings Gazette*, 1927, Billings Scrapbook, 11, Parmly Billings Library, Billings, MT.

⁶⁰ Carroll Van West devotes a chapter to the demise of Coulson, see Van West, *Capitalism on the Frontier*, 112-132; Sanborn maps, "Billings, MT," 1882-1954.

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and south to Greybull in the Yellowstone Valley. By hauling wool to the railhead on the return trip, Clark profited on both ends.

Three brothers -- Charles, Henry and James -- established Chapple Drugs in the early 1890s. The store was located on the first floor of the Belknap Block, on Montana and North 28th St. Henry and James were both doctors, and until St. Vincent's Hospital was opened in 1898, they provided emergency health care out of the back of the store.⁶¹

The Grand Hotel, erected by J.J. Walk and O.W. Nickey on the corner of First Avenue and North 27th St., opened in 1886 and "immediately became the social center of town". Ten years later, in January 1896, George Benninghoff and his sister Julia took over the business.⁶²

Bottling works and breweries were strong local businesses but the small operators were eclipsed in March 1899 when the Billings Brewery opened across from the NORTERN PACIFIC depot on Montana. The building was a towering Romanesque factory, at one time crowned by a huge illuminated sign depicting beer flowing from a tilted bottle into an empty glass. Known as "the beer that made Milwaukee jealous", the brew was sold from "Wyoming to Lewistown" and from "Livingston to the Dakotas."⁶³

A.L. Babcock completed the Yellowstone Valley Flouring Mill in May 1895. Grinding flour under the "Billings Best" logo, the mill had a daily output of 150 barrels. When the mill, located just south of the railroad tracks, burned in May of 1900, Babcock continued operations in the old depot building.

In April 1891, another newspaper started up — the Weekly Times. Judge J.D. Matheson was the editor/owner. The Democratic paper was sold in 1898 to Micajah C. Morris who took it from a weekly to a daily by 1904. It was located on First Ave. North & North 27th St., site of the present-day Sheraton Hotel. P.B. Moss founded the Billings Evening Journal in June 1906. It merged with the Billings Gazette in 1908. In July 1907, the Billings Times (formerly the Weekly Times) moved into a building at 2919 Montana Ave within the Billings Old Town Historic District. It went back to weekly publication and remains in print to this day.

Billings in the early Twentieth Century

In 1909, the Great Northern Railway built through Montana to Billings and beyond. That same year, Congress passed the Enlarged Homestead Act, allowing people to lay claim to 320-acre farms (double the previous size). What had been a steady flow of settlement suddenly became a raging torrent. In the heartland of dry farming, Billings was both a farm and rail hub. And from October 25-29, 1909, the city basked in the homesteading spotlight when it hosted the 4th Annual Dryland Farming Congress. Railroad magnates Jim and Louis Hill brought along Hardy Webster Campbell, father of the "scientific" approach to farming, who preached the dry farming gospel to participants from all the western states, Canadian provinces, Mexico and Russia.⁶⁴

Dryland farming formed the foundation of homestead practices in the Dakotas and Montana, and drew thousands of hopeful farmers onto the dry prairies. In the five years that followed, 10,000 homestead claims were filed in the Billings Land Office, and an estimated 30-40,000 people moved onto the agricultural frontiers of eastern Montana. Outside of town, some 100,000 acres were put into cultivation, while greater Yellowstone County reported 2½ million dry acres were

⁶¹ Chapple Drug remained at this location into the mid-twentieth century; *Billings Gazette*, 1942, Billings Scrapbook, 210-212, Parmly Billings Library, Billings, MT.

⁶² Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 20.

⁶³ The University of Montana holds the Billings Brewery records.

⁶⁴ Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder and William L. Lang, *Montana A History of Two Centuries*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 240-241.

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tilled for homestead farms.⁶⁵ By the 1910 census, Billings' population had shot to 10,031 ranking it the 6th fastest growing community in the nation. In 1920, the census numbered 15,100 in town.⁶⁶

At the height of the railroad and homestead era, Billings was a bustling railroad hub on the route of some 20 trains. Near the tracks, the agriculture boom catalyzed local manufacturing. J.D. Matheson, editor of the Weekly Times, first urged local farmers to experiment with growing sugar beets in April 1890, and after I.D. O'Donnell demonstrated on Hesper Farm that beets could be productively raised, Billings' sugar beet factory opened in 1906. Just five years later they produced 60 million pounds of sugar. By 1914 the crop was valued at over \$1,500,000.⁶⁷

Near the tracks, warehouses and processing facilities for agricultural products proliferated. On Montana Avenue, dairy farmers opened a depot for processing and pasteurizing milk. They ran five milk wagons through town. In 1914, the Billings Creamery produced 40,000 pounds of butter.⁶⁸ Armour Wholesale Meats established a cold house near the tracks and about 1912 moved into a large new brick warehouse on Minnesota Avenue, within the Billings Old Town Historic District. The Billings Brewery building was converted to a cannery in 1927.⁶⁹

Newly landed farmers clamored for much needed goods -- hardware and farm implements sold briskly during this era. In November 1908, Billings Hardware (formerly Babcock's Hardware) broke ground for a new and expansive building located at Montana and North Broadway. Up the street, were the Connolly Bros., Saddle and Harness Makers. They opened shop in 1913, and after 7 years in business, bought a lot 25' wide on Montana, and built a brick building in 1919, remaining at the same location into the 1990s. The Connolly Saddlery Building is within the Billings Old Town Historic District.

Banks abounded in Billings, each a monument to local prosperity. By 1905, there were six banks in town, with a combined capital of over half a million dollars. In late 1912, the Bank of Montana (later First Northwestern National) was formed with offices at Montana and 27th St. North. In September 1916, another bank - Security Trust and Savings - opened. Shortly thereafter, it moved to First Ave. North and North 27th St. where it remained for 35 years. The Montana National Bank, a Neo-Classical building erected in 1917 at 201 N. Broadway, is the last of these buildings to remain intact downtown.⁷⁰

Downtown was transformed during this "modern" era, and buildings of the late nineteenth century gave way to new, larger buildings that reflected the prosperity of Billings in the early twentieth century. The presence of the Burlington and Milwaukee Railroad along the 5th Avenue North right-of-way drew downtown development that direction, and northern portions of downtown became increasingly urban.

On March 24, 1909, a new downtown "Union Depot" serving the Northern Pacific, Great Northern and Burlington lines opened to the public.⁷¹ Hotels large and small sprouted at the heart of downtown to serve travelers to Billings. Most prominent were the Northern and the Grand Hotels. H.W. Rowley and P.B. Moss built the Northern, at First Ave. North and Broadway. Begun in May 1902, the original 69-room hotel opened in February 1904. Additions in 1914 and 1916 enlarged the building, all of which burned to the ground September 11, 1940. The Northern was immediately rebuilt. Nearby, the Grand Hotel expanded with a large annex addition in the 1910s. And reportedly following fire damage in 1920, the Benninghoffs replaced the original portion of the hotel with a more modern building. Only the annex was spared. Later owners added two more stories. Both hotels remain today, and are two of the most commanding on the Billings skyline.⁷²

⁶⁵ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 45.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 46, US Census 1910, 1920.

⁶⁷ According to Carroll Van West, the Billings Sugar Company dominated the regional economy to the mid-twentieth century, see Van West, "Good Times, Bad Times," 121-123; Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 48, 52.

⁶⁸ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 52-53.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 66.

⁷⁰ R.L. Polk, *Billings City Directories*, 1900-1920; Growth, Sowing & Reaping, *MT Banking 1910-1925*.

⁷¹ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 60.

⁷² *Billings Gazette*, Billings Scrapbook Vol. 5, 141, Parmly Billings Library, Billings, MT.

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Smaller hotels also grew up in the shadow of the depot. Along Montana in the depot district, several small hotels were erected during the second decade of the twentieth century. The Eagle, McCormick, Rex, Lincoln and Carlin are among those that still remain.

A sign of changing times, Guy Stapleton & Son broke ground on Dec 8, 1904 for a large store, after clearing away the old Cothron & Todd stable. The growing Hart-Albin store (founded in 1902 at 2617 Montana) was to occupy the ground floor of this "monster building of four stories."⁷³ The move was in part calculated to take best advantage of the consistent northward trend in downtown expansion.⁷⁴ In 1911, a new Federal Building at First Ave. North and North 26th St. was begun. Completed in January 1914, it housed the post office, courthouse, and a booming U.S. Land Office. In 1912, the Montana Power Company constructed the Electric Building, aglow at night with recessed panel lighting. In May 1918, the Hart-Albin Building was completed and opened for business at Broadway and Second Ave. North.

Homes and older commercial buildings in the way of the boom were quick to go. In August 1916, James Ash razed the old Allen Lumber Co building at North 29th St. and First Ave. North, to construct a three-story new brick building. And two of the city's oldest houses -- P.W. McAdow's home at Montana and North 31st St. in July 1919, and Heman Clark's home at North 31st St. and First Ave. North in April 1923 - were removed to make way for Wiggernhorn Brothers new wholesale drug store. The Fratt family home was moved from Second Ave. North and North 29th St., to build the David Fratt Memorial Building at a cost of \$150,000 (Architect J.G. Link took the home as partial payment of his fee and moved it to 142 Clark St.).⁷⁵

At the same time, desirable neighborhoods rose up on the edge of the expanding downtown. A stone mansion and carriage house ("The Castle") built by Austin North in the 600 block of North 29th St. helped to set the pace in this fashionable northern part of town. On the western side of town P.B. Moss built a red stone house on Division, and I.D. O'Donnell built a large new home at First St. West and Clark St. in 1904.

In the spring of 1904, lumberman W.J. Youmans bought Billings' first "self-propelled buggy" (automobile). The following year, the town's first auto dealership opened and the first car driving in from Red Lodge to Billings made it in 5 hours. Drivers could fuel up at the Yegen Brothers or even the Billings Laundry, pumping the same fluid used to dry-clean clothing for 70 cents a gallon.⁷⁶ Automotive businesses proliferated. Soon, auto showrooms, tire shops, service stations, garages, even auto wrecking companies, were squeezing out the horse and buggy set.

Agricultural equipment became mechanized, and threshers and tractor dealers staked out space in the warehouse zone. Freighting companies also set up shop in the business district. Bruce Cook Transfer and Storage was one of the longest operating. Located at Broadway and 3rd Avenue North, his horse-drawn delivery wagon made the rounds from 1904 to 1956.

After thirty years slumber, streetcar transport was revived in town on March 1, 1912, when Billings Traction Co. introduced six battery-operated cars. The Edison-Beech cars wove around town at 8 mph., and were temperamental. The batteries needed a recharge at the end of each 12-hour shift. Occasionally, passengers and passersby were enlisted to push cars whose batteries had run low, while on snowy days, the cars were almost inoperable.⁷⁷

The Billings Chamber of Commerce redoubled its efforts to promote the assets of Billings, creating exhibits to travel the country and firing off articles to the print media. At the end of 1917, they reported a population of 17,901. The Chamber reformed in 1919 as the Billings Commercial Club and purchased the Elks Club building at 301 North 27th St. where, just six years before, President Howard Taft had given a speech from the balcony.

⁷³ *Billings Gazette*, August 12, 1917.

⁷⁴ *Billings Gazette*, January 6, 1952.

⁷⁵ *Billings Gazette*, August 30, 1916; July 31, 1919, August 4, 1923; Kathryn Wright, *Historic Homes of Billings*, (Helena: Falcon Press Publishing Company, 1981), 5.

⁷⁶ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 39-41

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 48-50.

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After the turn of the century, theater venues expanded; by 1916 there were half a dozen large theaters downtown. When the old Opera House on Montana Ave. burned that September, a new \$150,000 Opera House was built right away. Locals pushed for a new location (Montana was by this time a bit seedy) and a site on North Broadway and Second Ave. North - formerly a tennis court - was chosen. The newly reborn Babcock Theater opened December 23, 1907 with the play *Blue Moon*. Designed by prominent Seattle theater architect, Edwin W. Houghton, it seated 1250 and featured a \$20,000 Wurlitzer Organ.

After the turn of the century, the building boom continued at a steady pace. In 1907 alone, five large buildings were in the works: the Opera House for \$150,000, the YMCA for \$85,000, a Masonic Temple for \$90,000, the Smith Building for \$50,000, and a major Northern Hotel Annex for \$100,000.

Small merchants thrived in this bustling downtown scene. Fashions and luxury items could be had on just about any street. Before prohibition came in 1917, indulgences such as liquor and cigars were easy to find. In fact, local cigar making became good business — between 1905 and 1910 there were six union shops that kept a steady supply of hand rolled cigars to all area saloons.⁷⁸

Drought and Depression – Billings Survives the 1920s and 1930s

Downtown Billings prospered as a trade center during the homestead “boom” period and by the end of the second decade of the twentieth century, the downtown Billings core of buildings has been established. The beginning of the end of the homestead period started in 1917 when the drought years began. By 1919, the drought encompassed over two-thirds of Montana and combined with other problems like grasshoppers, fires and high winds. General economic depression followed the drought and in Montana, one out of every two farmers lost their land to foreclosure during the early 1920's.

The failure of farms, of course, affected the economy of Billings which had flourished since the turn of the twentieth century. Another factor that influenced the downturn of Billings growth and development was the end of World War I, when resources like metal and lumber no longer were needed in the quantities the war effort required. And in 1918, prohibition closed the doors of the popular Billings Brewery Company and numerous saloons along Montana and Minnesota Avenues, thereby affecting businesses large and small.

The population of Billings in 1920 numbered approximately 15,000, a 50% increase from 1910. Population growth during the next ten years showed a “meager” growth of 8.5% or a little over 1000 people. Regardless, even in the midst of the depression, promotional materials touted Billings as the “Metropolis of the Midland Empire.”⁷⁹

Activities both in the City of Billings and its surrounding region helped maintain the Billings economy in the 1920s. The Western Sugar Company purchased the locally owned Billings Sugar Company in 1918 and became one of the most important industries to Billings and Montana. Anaconda Company opened coal mines in Colstrip in 1924 further establishing Billings as a distribution center. The discovery of oil in 1915 in the Elk Basin Field near the Montana-Wyoming border and later discoveries in 1919 north of Billings began the gradual and slow climb for Billings to become the center of the petroleum industry in Montana. In the early 1920s, natural gas discovered in Elk Basin brought a natural gas pipeline to Billings.⁸⁰

Although growth within the historic downtown core of Billings was slow in the 1920s, the town continued to expand northward. Two hospitals erected new buildings north of downtown Billings: the new St. Vincent hospital opened in 1923 and Billings Deaconess Hospital opened their 58-bed hospital in 1927.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Billings Gazette, n.d., Billings Scrapbooks, Parmly Billings Library, Billings, MT.

⁷⁹ US Census 1910, 1920; R. L. Polk, *Billings City Directory*, 1923.

⁸⁰ Van West, “Good Times, Bad Times,” 123-126.

⁸¹ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 61, 65, 66.

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In May 1928, the opening of Billings Municipal Airport on the top of the rimrocks allowed Billings to enter the modern age of air travel and insure its continued role as a business center for the region. Tourism gained a foothold in Billings when the Billings Commercial Club created a tourist camp in the early 1920s that the City of Billings soon took over. The route of the Yellowstone Trail traveled along Montana Avenue, and also helped promote tourism by bringing automobile traffic into downtown Billings. Numerous automobile- related businesses catered to the new mobile society.

Billings, like the rest of Montana, experienced a few years of prosperity in the late 1920s until 1929 when it joined the rest of the nation in the Great Depression. Again, the cycle of drought and depression weighed heavily on the Billings economy. One bright spot to the ensuing depression was the opening of the Fox Theatre in 1931 (now the Alberta Bair Performing Arts Center at 3rd Avenue North and North Broadway), designed in a wonderful Art Deco style. Four years later in 1935, a fire gutted another theatre, the Babcock Theatre but it was quickly rebuilt the same year.⁸² Fires also destroyed other businesses scattered throughout downtown Billings, like the Oliver Building in 1930 within the proposed Billings Old Town Historic District.

Beginning in 1933, New Deal relief programs of President Franklin D. Roosevelt brought needed employment and improvements to the City of Billings, including road and bridge improvements and parks developments. Most significantly for downtown Billings, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1939 provided funding for the new Billings City Hall (completed in 1940) on 3rd Avenue North and North 27th Street (used today by the Billings Police Department).⁸³

In 1931, with the first hanger at the airport completed, the Wyoming Air Service began to fly into Billings. Air travel to Billings improved with Northwest Airlines introducing regular airmail service in 1933 and making Billings a stop on its Chicago-Seattle run. By the mid-1930s, two other airlines flew into Billings. And on one exciting day in 1934, the City of Billings blasted North 27th Street to the top of the rims to provide direct access from downtown Billings to the airport.⁸⁴

One of the most dramatic events to downtown Billings in the 1930s occurred in June 1937 when the Billings Bench canal collapsed and sent two feet of water that flooded much of downtown Billings north of the tracks. One of the most amusing historic photographs of the flood shows a man in a kayak having his photo taken downtown. It appears men stood in line to have their souvenir photo taken by a resourceful photographer.⁸⁵

In 1935, the WPA *Guide to Montana* declared Billings as a "convenient transportation crossroads, and its wholesale trade flourishes."⁸⁶ While everything slowed during the depression, Billings businesses began to recover by 1935. By 1940, Billings population had grown to 23, 261 or a 42% increase from 1920.⁸⁷

Billings in the 1940s

The City of Billings lost one of its most significant landmarks in September 1940 when the Northern Hotel burned to the ground. The Northern served, since first constructed in 1904, as a social and business center of downtown Billings and it was a traumatic loss for Billings. P.B. Moss quickly rebuilt the Northern Hotel and it re-opened in June 1942, where it stood 10-stories high as the tallest building in Billings for many years.

The entrance of the United States into World War II curtailed much other activity in Billings. However, it appears that Billings benefited in its position as the transportation network and trade center of the region during the war years due both

⁸² Van West, *Images of Billings*, 42; Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 76-77.

⁸³ Ibid, 45.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 44.

⁸⁵ Hart, *Billings Montana's Trailhead*, 64.

⁸⁶ Works Progress Administration, *The WPA Guide to 1930s Montana*, compiled and Written by Federal Writers' Project for the State of Montana (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1994 reprint), 132.

132.

⁸⁷ US Census, 1930, 1940.

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to the increased production of agricultural products, from grain to livestock and to an increase in demand for petroleum products that resulted in expanded production.⁸⁸

The post-war period beginning in 1945 saw "rampant consumerism" after the restrictions of the war years. "Local businesses always seemed busy as customers crowded in to see the latest in technology and household conveniences."⁸⁹ By 1948, building construction in the city, including commercial and residential, passed all previous records with most of the growth outward from downtown Billings primarily to the west.⁹⁰

After the war, Billings, due to its strategic location near the major oil and gas fields in the surrounding region, established itself as the oil and gas center of the northern Great Plains. Numerous oil and gas company offices occupied buildings in downtown Billings. By 1949, construction of two new refineries, the Continental (Conoco) and Carter (Exxon), along the Yellowstone River adjacent to Billings was underway, further cementing Billings as the capital of the industry.

In 1950, the Billings Commercial Club used city statistics to declare that "Billings is one of the most rapid growing cities in the United States today."⁹¹ Between 1945 and 1950 the population of Billings increased almost 50% with a total population of slightly over 31,000.⁹² Historian Lawrence Small noted that "Billings by 1950 was on the verge of [an] economic expansion that would ... produce the modern city."⁹³

The year 1950 marks the end of the period of historic significance developed for this National Register of Historic Places nomination. Since the mid twentieth century, Billings has more than tripled in population, and various centers of economic activity have developed outside the city core. However, as the Old Town District shows, remnants of the historic periods from settlement through the post World War II boom all are represented at the core of the city of Billings.

Architectural Context

A scattering of tents and rough shacks appear on the flat, sagebrush-covered landscape at the eastern edge of the Clark's Fork Bottom early in the spring of 1882. Similar to a mining town, the early influx of men and women created the first "boom" period of Billings in anticipation of the imminent arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad. They erected "rudimentary structures and facilities" to provide various services to the railroad workers.⁹⁴ These buildings clustered around a two-story wood frame building, soon to be called "Headquarters Hotel" built by the Northern Pacific to house railroad workers.

As the railroad advanced westward, the Montana and Minnesota Land and Improvement Company (MMLIC) platted the new town of Billings in April 1882. Geographer John Hudson identifies the symmetrical town plat of Billings as the classic Northern Pacific railroad townsite design, with the railroad as "the centerpiece, flanked by two streets with business lots facing the tracks, which in turn were backed by an extensive gridiron of business and residential blocks on both sides of the tracks."⁹⁵ The townsite plat defined all streets as 80 feet wide with 20 feet alleys and all regular lots to measure 25 feet wide and 140 feet in length with most blocks containing 24 lots.

The MMLIC named the street north of the tracks Montana Avenue and the street south of the tracks Minnesota Avenue. These streets faced each other across the railroad corridor and in the early years of Billings, developed simultaneously. Early historic photographs show how their architectural development mirrored one another. Miles City photographer L.A.

⁸⁸ Van West, *Images of Billings*, 48.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 49.

⁹⁰ "Billings Grows in 1948," on file, City of Billings vertical file, Parmly Billings Library, Billings, MT.

⁹¹ *Billings Herald*, January 25, 1951.

⁹² US Census, 1940, 1950.

⁹³ Lawrence F. Small, "A Century of Politics on the Yellowstone," Billings, MT, 1983 as quoted in Van West, *Images of Billings*, 49.

⁹⁴ Elliott West, *The Saloon on the Rocky Mountain Frontier*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 30.

⁹⁵ Hudson, "Main Streets of the Yellowstone Valley," 64.

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Huffman in a May 1822 photograph provides an early Billings streetscape with buildings aligned on one side of the street consisting of canvas tents, rough wood frame buildings with false-front facades and others under construction.

The Northern Pacific railroad arrived in Billings on August 22, 1882. The following October, they moved the "Headquarters Hotel" to the north side of the railroad tracks at the end of North 28th Street where it functioned as a depot and hotel. Headquarters Hotel, until it burned in 1891, served as the focal point of the new town. While it is not obvious until much later, the location of the Headquarters Hotel on the north side of the tracks affected the development of the two primary business avenues that parallel the railroad tracks. Passengers debarking from the train entered Billings oriented towards Montana Avenue, not Minnesota Avenue.

The following year, Northern Pacific photographer F. Jay Haynes took photographs of Montana Avenue looking east and Minnesota Avenue looking west. The earlier canvas tents and crude frame buildings along Montana Avenue had been replaced with more substantial one to two-story buildings with typical storefronts of central recessed entries flanked with large display windows.

Haynes' photograph of Minnesota Avenue appears similar to Montana Avenue but not quite as well established, exhibiting more single-story false-front buildings. P.W. McAdow General Merchandise store stands at the corner of Minnesota Avenue and 27th Street, the primary arterial into Billings from the south. McAdow's store is the classic false-front commercial building with the gable roof hidden by the vertical extension of the facade, making the building look larger than it really is. The false-front is the most common early commercial architectural style utilized on the western frontier. Billings, like most western towns, erected false-front facades to signify a sense of permanency and stability to the fledgling town. Partially burned in the early 1890s, the McAdow store at 2702 Minnesota Avenue was rebuilt by 1896 in the same footprint and today is representative of the initial 1880s commercial false-front wood construction regardless of alterations it has experienced throughout the twentieth century.

The 1883 city directory for Billings is revealing not only in regard to the growth of Billings, known as the "Magic City" due to its surprisingly rapid growth in a relatively short period of time, but the gradual discernible difference between Montana Avenue and Minnesota Avenue. Montana Avenue businesses tended more towards the professional, including the first bank, four hotels, four doctors, two newspaper offices plus all the lawyers had offices on the north side. Minnesota Avenue businesses included a hardware store, three merchandise stores, two millinery shops, two restaurants, a billiards and liquor and cigar store. Both avenues had numerous saloons.

After the initial growth in the early 1880s, Minnesota Avenue experienced little development in the late 1880s into the 1890s. In fact, by 1891, the streetscape along Minnesota Avenue seems deflated. Several businesses have disappeared and a fire partially burned both McAdow and the other two-story Camp building. Two one-story "female boarding houses" now stand within the block, generally indicating houses of prostitution. This is the only instance where such houses are found west of South 27th Street.

The evident decline of the 2700 block in the early 1890s is overshadowed by the beginning of the Yegen Brothers dominance on Minnesota Avenue, particularly within the 2800 block. In the mid-1880s, Peter and Christian Yegen with their sister purchased their first commercial building, a two-story false-front wood frame building at the southwest corner of Minnesota and South 28th Street under the name P. Yegen and Co. They soon began to expand their small store to include "a larger grocery section, dry goods, hardware, produce, furniture and farm implements."⁹⁶ By 1890, their success allowed them to construct a two-story sandstone building on the opposite end of the block. One can only wish that this impressive stone building still graced the corner. The symmetrical facade held a magnificent stone arch with the classic storefront sheltered beneath the arch. The upper facade held four window openings evenly spaced across the wall set on a continuous stone sill. A raised signage read P. YEGEN & COMPANY.

Throughout the 1890s, the Yegen Brothers continued to expand their business in the 2800 Block on the south side of Minnesota Avenue and as they did, the facade of the building gradually changed as well. By 1895, the original stone

⁹⁶ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 19.

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building on the corner extended over half-way along the block, exhibiting display windows with transoms, a row of evenly spaced windows on the upper facades and simple denticulated ornamentation at the parapet. Yegen's preferred to use the locally available Heffner sandstone for all their buildings to date. A later 1898 photograph shows a continuous stone facade topped with a large painted sign advertising all the goods available in the store. The last building visible on the block is not owned by Yegen's but is the Gilsdorf Meat Market. This one-story building has an ornate pediment that is distinctive from the Yegen Block.

By 1900, the Yegen's Block is complete after the construction of a two-story brick building that consists of a large store and their savings bank building. The brick walls are in contrast to the massive stone construction and features brick pilasters and minimal brick ornamentation. A 1909 fire destroyed this brick building but it was quickly rebuilt to the same design. Business on the Yegen Block undoubtedly increased with the influx of settlers into the region to claim land under the 1909 and 1912 homestead laws. Billings City Drug and later Paterson Drug stood at the southwest corner of this block, later to be demolished for the Eagles Building at 2822 Minnesota Avenue.

The success of the Yegen Brothers influenced development elsewhere along Minnesota Avenue. The Yegen Brothers supplied ranchers and farmers with all the goods, machinery and household materials they needed. In turn, the 2700 block between South 27th Street and South 28th Street found its own niche by providing numerous services to the same, like barbers, saloons and cigar stores. Today, the adjoining one or two-story brick buildings illustrate this resurgence of Minnesota Avenue during the 1890s and the first few years in the twentieth century. All are masonry buildings sharing a common wall and represent examples of the Western Commercial architectural style of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with basic storefront organization and symmetrical upper facades exhibiting various forms of ornamental details. The architectural style for commercial building in the West has been given various labels over the years that include brick-front, Main Street style or western vernacular. Recently, Western Commercial is preferred and has been used in this nomination.

The characteristics of the Western Commercial brick buildings that once lined the streets of Billings are typical of most western downtown commercial districts. They have a long, rectangular plan that is perpendicular to the street and have flat or gently sloping roofs hidden by a parapet or pediment. They stand one to three stories in height, have three to five bay organization and are clad with brick. The street level generally houses stores, while offices, meeting halls, rooms or hotels occupy the upper levels. A typical storefront consists of a central recessed entry flanked to each side by large plate glass windows. Transom lights across the entrance and display windows illuminate the interior. Window openings are symmetrical and dominate the upper façade wall, and integrate different elements to accent the window treatments or create horizontal pattern. The façade is finished with an elaborate pressed metal cornice or brick decorative designs reminiscent of late nineteenth century Victorian design. In the early twentieth century, decorative elements became less ornate and simpler in design with brick detailing.

All two-story commercial buildings have experienced alterations to their lower facade but two (Globe Theatre at 2716 Minnesota Avenue and Crystal Bar at 2718 Minnesota Avenue) exhibit original intact upper facades, displaying round brick arches and round-arched hoods moldings and stone sills respectively, and both finished with a parapet decorated with corbelled and angle-laid brick. Only the interior of one building (Western Bar at 2712 Minnesota Avenue) allows us to see the original window openings and trim intact on the second floor. The Covington Building at 2714 Minnesota exhibits a Mesker & Brothers iron front, illustrating the availability of such technology by rail.

Smaller single-story commercial buildings like the M. Henihan Saloon at 2710 Minnesota and the Yukon Bar at 2720 Minnesota Avenue help fill the block, all display simple brick. The Yukon Bar at 2720 Minnesota has recently been rehabilitated and returned to its original design intent sporting the classic storefront of centered recessed entrance flanked by display windows with original simple brick detailing above.

Across 27th Street to the east, at the southwest corner of Minnesota and South 27th Street stands the L&L Building (listed December 19, 2008) at 2624 Minnesota Avenue, constructed between 1893 and 1896. The L&L is a two-story western commercial building with an Italianate influence exhibited by a classic nineteenth century iron storefront with intermediate ornate cornice and a unique wrap-around facade. This building successfully underwent a certified historic tax rehabilitation

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between 2004 and 2006 and is a showcase for historic preservation efforts in Billings, especially in its prominent location at the entrance to downtown Billings.

Unfortunately, with the exception of the two-story brick Maple Leaf Club at 10 South 26th Street, the City of Billings demolished the rest of this block in the mid-1980s and many turn-of-the-century western commercial brick buildings were lost. This length of Minnesota Avenue, as mentioned previously, fronted the infamous China Alley and held numerous restaurants, saloons, laundries and the like during the first half of the twentieth century. Further eastward, in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, up to thirteen "female boarding houses" lined Minnesota Avenue between South 26th and South 24th Streets, providing another service to the men in town to pick up supplies.

After the initial development of Minnesota Avenue between South 27th and South 29th, smaller businesses gradually appeared in the mid-1890s into the early 1900s on the 2900 block of Minnesota Avenue. Surprisingly, historic photographs show several small false-front wood frame buildings at this late date rather than brick. The wood frame one-story Silver Dollar Inn at 2902 Minnesota Avenue sits in the footprint of the former false-front Yegen's Plumbing and Heating building. The Hogue and Robinson Building further down the block is a two-story wood frame building that holds a double storefront. Although the facade wall has been updated, the original lap siding and window openings are still intact underneath.

Kirk's Grocery at 2920 Minnesota and the Big Four Second Hand Store at 2922 Minnesota both reflect a more minimal approach to the Western Commercial architectural style. The historic facades are in keeping with the classic storefront design, exhibiting recessed central entrances flanked to each side by plate glass windows. However, while the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Western Commercial style displayed ornate embellishments to their upper facades, by the end of the last decade of the twentieth century, these embellishments had fallen out of fashion, replaced more minimal decorative elements, utilizing primarily brick detailing. This simplified Western Commercial style carries into the second decade of the twentieth century and is particularly prevalent in warehouse construction.

The commercial district along the south side of Minnesota Avenue today embraces four blocks and architecturally, with a few exceptions, is the same that emerged during the last decade of the nineteenth century into the mid-1910s. While some later development occurs on the side streets, the commercial business district lining the south side of Minnesota Avenue is complete. This is in stark contrast to Montana Avenue north of the tracks.

Geographer John Hudson explains that the symmetrical townsite design with railroad transecting the center of the downtown area always results in one side of the tracks developing as the primary commercial center and Billings is a prime example.⁹⁷ By the end of the first decade in the twentieth century, the north side of the tracks reflects the growth of Billings northward. All public buildings, offices, major department stores, hotels, churches, and cultural centers are located on the north side. Historic photographs reveal the continuous row of brick-front commercial buildings lining the north side of Montana Avenue from North 24th Street to North 30th Street. By this time, downtown Billings had also expanded northward on the numbered streets to the corresponding numbered avenues.

It is apparent that the reason the buildings extended as far west as North 30th Street is the Parmly Billings Memorial Library (listed October 26, 1972). Helena architect Charles S. Haire designed the Parmly Billings Memorial Library in the Richardson Romanesque style, the most elaborate style within the historic district. The design used coursed, locally quarried rough-faced sandstone blocks with round-arch windows, a wide, arched entrance and two round towers with conical roofs. When dedicated in 1901, the library's "commanding" location on Montana Avenue and its imposing masonry architecture served as a testament to the entry of downtown Billings into the twentieth century.

As mentioned previously, the early 1880s saw most of the professional offices and businesses on Montana Avenue. Architecturally, after several fires on Montana Avenue in the 1880s, brick became the primary building material, supplied by local brickyards. Brick-veneered wood frame buildings were limited in the early years of development, as the promoters of Billings strove for a permanent and prosperous appearance attained with impressive masonry architecture. The

⁹⁷ John C. Hudson, *Plains Country Towns*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 88.

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commercial architecture along Montana Avenue generally expressed the economic position and individual tastes of the property owner. Few could afford the services of trained architects in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Often, designs of buildings would be a cooperative effort between the contractor and the original owners, undoubtedly using available pattern books for assistance. This explains the degrees of ornamentation commercial buildings displayed along Montana Avenue into the twentieth century. Of course, the immediate proximity to the railroad network provided accessibility to architectural elements like iron-fronts, windows, doors and other embellishments for the façade.

The architecture of downtown Billings is typical of most Western downtowns and it defined downtown Billings in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. The Montana Avenue Historic District established in 1978 concentrated its efforts on this theme in the commercial district across from the Northern Pacific Depot constructed in 1909. From North 26th Street to North 24th Street, hotels and businesses “crowded the area” catering to travelers and today “remains as an intact expression of turn-of-the-century commercial architecture.”⁹⁸

This “intact expression” ended at North 26th Street and from here towards North 29th Street, the historic commercial buildings on the north side of Montana Avenue have disappeared due to fire or demolition, and replaced primarily with parking lots and a parking garage. The Losekamp Block at 2817-19 Montana Avenue is the only vestige remaining of this once prosperous thriving streetscape. The Losekamp Block, built in the later half of the first decade of the nineteenth century, has a historically compatible renovated lower facade but in contrast, the upper façade exhibits its rich original ornamentation, fitting for one of the early successful businessmen of Billings.⁹⁹

An apparent transition occurs after Montana reaches North 29th Street. The 2900 block between North 29th Street and North 30th Street was slow to develop even into the twentieth century. This block is an interesting mix of architectural styles, from the basic brick front western commercial to a unique architecturally designed Art Deco building. Three buildings represent the later more subtle western commercial style. The unimposing Billings Times building at 2919 Montana, a one and one-half story building constructed in 1907 is similar to Kirk’s Grocery on Minnesota Avenue. Two other buildings arrived by 1920, the one and one-half story Connolly Saddlery at 2909 Montana Avenue and the two-story American Dry Cleaners at 2905-07 Montana Ave, both utilizing cream colored brick in geometric designs and simple brick detailing.

In 1916, business owners erected buildings at both ends of the block. The two-story Poudre Furniture Building at the northeast corner of Montana Avenue and North 30th Street continues the Western Commercial style. It exhibits a typical storefront with symmetrical upper façade on both facing streets displaying decorative elements. The Yates Building at 4 North 29th Street at the opposite end of the block is not typical. This one-story commercial building similar to a broad front style embraces eclectic features incorporating brick pilasters, parapets, decorative brickwork and ornamentation. Although the original design of this building is unknown, in 1928, Billings architect Chandler Cohagen designed the resultant remodel for the “Yates Garage.”

Available 1935 photographs of the north side of Montana Avenue between North 29th and North 30th Street reveal few changes overall. Two years after this photograph was taken, Chandler Cohagen designed the Service Candy Company Building at 2921 Montana Avenue that completed the block, using party walls of the Billings Times and the Poudre Furniture Building. This is the most distinctive Art Deco building within the Billings Old Town Historic District whose single-story façade exhibits Art Deco characteristics like asymmetrical façade, concrete scoring, and irregular window openings filled with glass blocks.

Although the north side of Montana Avenue east of North 29th Street no longer reflects its original appearance, the south side of Montana Avenue within the railroad right-of-way provides three excellent examples of some of the first large scale

⁹⁸ National Register of Historic Places Sign Text Yellowstone County “Billings Townsite Historic District.” At <http://montanahistory.wiki.pbworks.com/National+Register++Yellowstone>

⁹⁹ The only other building on the north side of Montana is a noncontributing building within the district due to the insensitive remodeling of the façade to its historic appearance and character.

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commercial development that appeared in Billings.¹⁰⁰ Land within the right-of-way became available for lease in 1909 due to the increasing freight business and this instantly initiated construction of large commercial retail buildings and warehouses to serve as distribution centers serviced by the railroad. This was the beginning of the homestead boom period in Montana and Billings served as the trade center for the region, therefore benefiting from increased activity. Billings Hardware at 2802 Montana Avenue was erected almost immediately in 1909. The following year, the right-of-way saw the construction of the Oliver Building (listed December 19, 2008) at 2701 Montana Avenue) and four years later, the Selvidge-Babcock Building at 2718 Montana Avenue. Only the Oliver Building, constructed by Oliver Plows was a national company whereas prominent Billings' businessmen owned the other two. Fire destroyed the upper stories of the Selvidge-Babcock and Oliver buildings and architects J.G. Link and Chandler Cohagen designed the remodels respectively.

Again, these type of buildings are classified here as the Western Commercial architectural style. Only one, the Oliver Building, was built originally as a warehouse while the other two were constructed to provide commercial, retail and office space in downtown Billings. While not strictly warehouses, all three buildings illustrate utilitarian warehouse style characteristics, exhibiting little ornamentation and an uninterrupted rhythm of fenestration across the upper levels to allow for ample interior light. The buildings are massive, sit on a prominent corner location and generally fill a half-block. They have load-bearing exterior brick walls and heavy interior timber framing. By the second decade of the twentieth century, there was minimal use of decoration, with decorative accents primarily reserved for façade entrances, wall finishes or simple detailing at the top of the wall. All buildings are set on concrete foundations with full basement, stand on exposed bases and are covered with a flat roof. The sides facing the tracks exhibit loading doors, rows of evenly spaced window openings. Loading docks once lined the walls adjacent to railroad tracks or spurs.

It is interesting to note that before the right-of-way opened for leasing along Montana Avenue, the Northern Pacific maintained the land as a city park. This is in stark contrast with the right-of-way on the south side of the tracks. Beginning in the early 1880s, numerous warehouses lined the north side of Minnesota Avenue. In the late nineteenth century, these included the Northern Pacific freight and wool warehouse east of South 27th Street, the T.C. Power warehouse, whose stage traveled from Billings north to Fort Benton on the Missouri River, the Heman Clark warehouse on the northwest corner of South 29th Street, the Yegen Brothers warehouses, several additional wool warehouses, and for a brief period, two breweries standing side by side.¹⁰¹

The warehouses constructed along the north side of Minnesota Avenue are above all else fundamentally utilitarian in nature like the three warehouses east of South 27th Street on Minnesota, all built during the 1910s. Two warehouses are small, one-story brick buildings with minimal decoration and windows augmented by segmental arches. Swift and Company, a national meat processing and shipping building, constructed a two and one-half story warehouse, exhibiting symmetrical fenestration, simple decorative brick patterning and limestone capped parapets. This building is presently near completion of a tax credit historic rehabilitation.

Along the north side of Minnesota Avenue are two other classic Western Commercial warehouse buildings, both on opposite corners of South 28th Street (Broadway) and Minnesota Avenue within the right-of-way. The Armour Building (listed July 7, 2004) at 1 South Broadway is a rectangular two story building that exhibits warehouse characteristics throughout. The Ryan Grocery Building at 2 South Broadway is also a rectangular brick building with a two storefront façade and simply ornamented with raised brick design and symmetrical fenestration on upper levels on both street facades.

There are three other examples of brick warehouses within the district situated on prominent corners of South 28th and South 29th Streets and First Avenue South, the first east/west arterial south of Minnesota Avenue. Although the upper windows have been replaced, all warehouses are strong examples of the warehouse western commercial style. All three

¹⁰⁰ In 2007, Ann Koostra-Manning prepared a National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the Billings Townsite Historic District Boundary Increase I that included five commercial warehouse buildings between North 27th Street and North 26th Street, being confined to the 2600 block south of Montana Avenue.

¹⁰¹ Further research is necessary to determine why the Northern Pacific allowed these warehouses to stand within the right-of-way prior to its leasing of the land in 1909.

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display warehouse characteristics with symmetrical facades and continuous rows of like fenestration but all express their own individual design elements. In 1919, two national companies erected warehouses along a railroad spur line. Billings architect Chandler Cohagen designed the Otis-Kiichli Candy Building at 29 South 29th Street and incorporated distinctive Cohagen design elements like brick pilasters and stone/concrete accents. The Crane Company Building at 24 South 30th Street presents a pronounced corner bay and simple brick ornamentation. The 1927 International Harvester Building has a symmetrical façade and exhibits large storefront openings to display the farm equipment and is probably based on a standard design used by the company. Railroad spur lines connect the buildings to the main lines.

First Avenue South also holds two representative examples of automobile-related architecture, both located at corner locations. The first half of the twentieth century saw the prevalence of the automobile change the urban landscape with the introduction of numerous automobile-related businesses. The Sunset Garage, built in 1917 at 21 S. 29th Street and the later 1939 Community Gas & Oil Building at 2921 First Avenue South incorporate new construction technologies of reinforced concrete, made popular in the early 1920s. The Community Oil and Gas Building is the only example within the historic district of the Streamline Moderne style and illustrates design elements like curved corners, smooth surfaces and vertical decorative lines.

A third reinforced concrete building is the Safeway Store at 18 South 27th Street. Designed by J.G. Link, it displays Art Deco ornamentation on the symmetrical façade, emphasized by both the vertical and horizontal lines scored into the concrete. Art Deco elements also appear at 16 South 27th Street at the two-story c. 1932 Glen Apartments at 14 South 27th Street in its asymmetrical façade accented by brown brick ornamentation in triangular designs.

Other 1940s buildings are within the right-of-way at North and South 29th Street, including the Northern Pacific Freight House at 2902 Montana Avenue and the Malin-Yates Building at 2902 Minnesota Avenue and are completely utilitarian in their form and function. Both buildings extend the length of the block, are one-story and exhibit numerous garage door openings. The Northern Pacific Freight House is, in fact, the only railroad-related buildings within the historic district and displays numerous garage door openings (now infilled) on both side walls. The Price Motor Sales building, erected in 1948, is a Quonset Hut and is the only example of this functional style within the Billings Old Town Historic District.

Architects

The works of three of Montana's most prominent architects, Charles S. Haire, John Gustave Link and Chandler Cohagen, are represented within the Billings Old Town Historic District: All designed numerous buildings throughout, and their designs grace a large percentage of public and private historic properties in Billings dating from primarily the first half of the twentieth century.

Charles S. Haire designed the Richardson Romanesque Parmly Billings Memorial Library. Mr. Haire first came to Montana in 1887, working briefly for the Northern Pacific Railroad Company in Butte. The following year, he moved to Helena where he joined the prominent firm of Wallace & Thornburg. In 1891, he opened his own architectural firm in Helena, and was involved with the erection of institutions across the state, including the Boulder School for Deaf and Dumb, the State Agricultural School in Bozeman and Dillon and the Ursuline Convent campus in Miles City. In Billings, besides the Parmly Billings Library, he designed the original St. Vincent's Hospital and many private residences. Mr. Haire joined with John G. Link in 1906 to create the architectural firm of Link & Haire. This firm became the leading architectural firm in the state, with offices in Billings, Helena, Missoula, Butte and Lewistown. Mr. Haire died in 1925.

John Gustave Link designed two buildings within the historic district, a remodel of the Selvidge-Babcock Building in 1922 after fire destroyed the upper stories and the Safeway Building in 1940, one of many that he designed throughout the state. J.G. Link first settled in Butte, Montana in 1896 and formed several. He joined with Charles S. Haire in 1906 when they formed the architectural firm of Link & Haire. Mr. Link first came to Billings in 1899 to erect the Billings Brewery Building and located here in 1906 to open their Billings office.

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Link & Haire designed numerous buildings in downtown Billings during the first half of the twentieth century, including the Hart-Albin Building (1917), the Electric Building (1913) the Northern Hotel (1902-04), The Stapleton Building (1904), St. Patrick's Catholic Church and the second St. Vincent's Hospital (1923).

For years, Link & Haire was the leading architectural firm in the state, with offices in Billings, Helena, Missoula, Butte and Lewistown. They provided plans for thousands of buildings statewide, both public and private, including 18 of the 56 county courthouses. In addition, they trained many young architects over the years, including both their sons, who followed in their father's footsteps.

Chandler Carroll Cohagen is the third architect represented within the Billings Old Town Historic District. He designed two buildings, the Otis Kiichi Candy warehouse building and the Art Deco Service Candy Company Building. He also provided plans for the remodel of the Oliver Building after a fire in 1930 and for a remodel of the Yates Building in 1928.

Cohagen moved to Billings with his family in 1907 after graduating high school. After attending architectural school at the University of Michigan, he returned to Billings and opened the architectural office of McIver, Cohagen and Marshall, partnering with college classmate Angus Vaughn McIver of Great Falls. From 1920-1936, McIver and Cohagen were partners in a firm based in Great Falls and Billings. In 1936, Cohagen began his independent practice, which he operated for the remainder of his career. He became not only one of the most influential architects in Billings, but also throughout Montana and Wyoming, designing numerous significant buildings.

Some of his most notable commissions in Billings include: Orchard School (1918), Billings Deaconess Hospital (1918), Highland Golf Club (1930), Lincoln High School remodel (1935), YMCA remodel (1937), Billings City Hall (with J. G. Link, 1920, 1939-40), Eastern Montana College girls dormitory (1941), Eastern Montana College Science Building (1948), Yellowstone County Courthouse (1955-56). Perhaps most notable of his works, and one of Cohagen's greatest personal honors, was designing the "new" governor's mansion in Helena (1959).

Integrity

The Billings Old Town Historic District is a vital historic district that retains integrity to present the appearance and character of the original historic core of downtown Billings from the early 1880 to 1950 when Billings emerged as an oil and gas capitol of the Northern Plains. The original townsite grid pattern is intact with an active rail line operating and avenues and streets running parallel and perpendicular respectively to the tracks. Within the district boundary, fire and demolitions have removed several historic properties that are now filled with private and public parking lots. Between South 27th Street and South 26th Street, the south side of Minnesota Avenue has experienced the greatest loss of historic commercial properties.

Material, design and workmanship of the buildings that compose the historic district retain sufficient integrity to represent the architectural evolution of the district itself. Upper facades of two-story brick buildings display, with a few exceptions, their original design, displaying original openings and decorative elements. Even the small one or one and one-half story buildings exhibit their original brick detailing. Most storefronts at the street-facing facade have been remodeled over the years, introducing new windows and doors, a common occurrence by store owners to improve their property. A few facades have been covered with incompatible cladding materials but generally retain original entries and window openings. The Yegen Block on Minnesota was transformed in the late 1930s and 1940s into the modern Elliott's Furniture store and continues to reflect this transformation.

Several storefronts have recently been rehabilitated to their original design intent, strengthening the character of the building and the historic streetscape within the district. Others appear to have intact historic materials beneath the remodeling, making them excellent candidates for rehabilitation. The large warehouse and retail buildings have been updated with replacement windows at their upper facades but all retain the original openings and decorative elements. There are four buildings within the district that have been so extensively altered in recent years that they have lost all

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historic fabric and do not contribute to the district. One other building has lost integrity due to its movement from its original location. Three buildings are noncontributing to the historic district due to their construction date after 1950.

Historic preservation efforts within the Billings Old Town Historic District began in earnest when concerned citizens saved the Parmly Billings Memorial Library from demolition in the early 1980s. Within the past ten years, private parties have successfully rehabilitated three historic properties along Minnesota Avenue into office and living spaces, thus beginning the rejuvenation of this neglected part of town south of the tracks. North of the tracks, one warehouse has been rehabilitated into office spaces and awaits its new tenants. The establishment of the Billings Old Town Historic District will bring a renewed sense of purpose toward the protection and preservation of the historic properties.

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Aerial of Billings Old Town Historic District

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Name of Property: Billings Old Town Historic District
City or Vicinity: Billings, MT
County: Yellowstone State: MT
Photographer: Joan L. Brownell
Date Photographed: January 2010
Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Photographs

Parmly Billings Library at 2822 Montana Ave, north side, view to south.
0001

Oliver Building at 2702 Montana Ave, north and east sides, view to southwest.
0002

Montana Avenue Streetscape between North 29th and North 30th Streets, view to north.
0003

Montana Avenue Streetscape from North 30th Street, view to east.
0004

Losekamp Building at 2819 Montana Avenue, south side, view to north.
0005

Service Candy Company Building at 2921 Montana Avenue, south side, view to north.
0006

Former Northern Pacific right-of-way (now Burlington Northern & Santa Fe), view to northeast.
0007

Railroad right-of-way, Selvidge-Babcock and Billings Hardware, south sides, view to northwest.
0008

Minnesota Avenue Streetscape between South 27th Street and South 28th Street, L&L Building at 2624 Minnesota Avenue visible in background, view to east.
0009

M. Henihan Buildings at 2710 and 2710 ½ Minnesota Avenue, north side, view to southeast.
0010

Yegen Block at 2802 Minnesota Avenue, north side, view to south/southwest.
0011

South side (rear) of Yegen Block at 2802 Minnesota, view to northeast.
0012

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From left to right, Kirk's Grocery at 2920 Minnesota Avenue, Big Four Store at 2922 Minnesota and Dave's Garage at 2924 Minnesota, north side, view to south.
 0013

Ryan Grocery Warehouse at 2 South Broadway, east and south sides, view to east.
 0014

L&L Building at 2624 Minnesota Avenue, north and west sides, view to east.
 0015

Maple Leaf Club at 10 South 26th Street, east and north sides, view to west.
 0016

Labor Temple Building at 29 South 29th Street, south and east sides, view to north/northwest.
 0017

1st Avenue South Streetscape, south district boundary at centerline, Community Oil and Gas at 2921 1st Avenue South to left, view to northeast.
 0018

The following historic photographs are courtesy of Western Heritage Center, Billings, MT

South side of Minnesota Avenue, 1883. P.W. McAdow Store to immediate left at 2702 Minnesota Avenue.
 0019

P. Yegen & Company Building at 2802 Minnesota Avenue, 1890.
 0020

Yegen Block, c. 1900, looking east from South 29th Street.
 0021

Silver Dollar Inn, 1934; Hogue-Robinson Building in background.
 0022

Minnesota Avenue 1935 at 2900 Block; Kirk's Grocery to left, Big Four Store in middle.
 0023

Minnesota Avenue 1935, looking east from South 30th Street.
 0024

Parmly Billings Memorial Library with Minnesota Avenue in background, c. 1901.
 0025

Montana Avenue, looking east from North 29th Street, c. 1912.
 0026

Montana Avenue at 2800 Block, view to west, 1918.
 0027

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Montana Avenue, looking east from mid-2800 Block, Billings Hardware to immediate left.
0028

Montana Avenue 1935, between North 29th Street and North 20th Street, view to west.
0029

Montana Avenue 1935, looking northeast from North 30th Street.
0030

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Parmly Billings Library at 2822 Montana Ave, north side, view to south.
Photo 0001.



Oliver Building at 2702 Montana Ave, north and east sides, view to southwest.
Photo 0002.

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Montana Avenue Streetscape between North 29th and North 30th Streets, view to north.
Photo 0003.



Montana Avenue Streetscape from North 30th Street, view to east.
Photo 0004.

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Losekamp Building at 2819 Montana Avenue, south side, view to north.
Photo 0005.



Service Candy Company Building at 2921 Montana Avenue, south side, view to north.
Photo 0006.

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Former Northern Pacific right-of-way (now Burlington Northern & Santa Fe), view to northeast.

Photo 0007.



Railroad right-of-way, Selvidge-Babcock and Billings Hardware, south sides, view to northwest.

Photo 0008.

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Minnesota Avenue Streetscape between South 27th and South 28th Street, L&L Building at 2624 Minnesota Avenue visible in background, view to east.
Photo 0009.



M. Henihan Buildings at 2710 and 2710 1/2 Minnesota Avenue, north side, view to southeast.
Photo 0010.

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Yegen Block at 2802 Minnesota Avenue, north side, view to southwest.
Photo 0011.



South side (rear) of Yegen Block at 2802 Minnesota, view to northeast.
Photo 0012.

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From left to right, Kirk's Grocery at 2920 Minnesota Avenue, Big Four Store at 2922 Minnesota and Dave's Garage at 2924 Minnesota, north side, view to south.
Photo 0013.



Ryan Grocery Warehouse at 2 South Broadway, east and south sides, view to east.
Photo 0014.

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L&L Building at 2624 Minnesota Avenue, north and west sides, view to east.
Photo 0015.



Maple Leaf Club at 10 South 26th Street, east and north sides, view to west.
Photo 0016.

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Labor Temple Building at 29 South 29th Street, south and east sides, view to north/northwest.

Photo 0017.



1st Avenue South Streetscape, south district boundary at centerline, Community Oil and Gas at 2921 1st Avenue South to left, view to northeast.

Photo 0018.

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South side of Minnesota Avenue, 1883. P.W. McAdow Store to immediate left at 2702 Minnesota Avenue.

Photo 19.



P. Yegen & Company Building at 2802 Minnesota Avenue, 1890.

Photo 0020.

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Yegen Block, c. 1900, looking east from South 29th Street.
Photo 0021.



Silver Dollar Inn, 1934; Hogue-Robinson Building in background.
Photo 0022.

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Minnesota Avenue 1935 at 2900 Block; Kirk's Grocery to left, Big Four Store in middle.
Photo 0023.



Minnesota Avenue 1935, looking east from South 30th Street.
Photo 0024.

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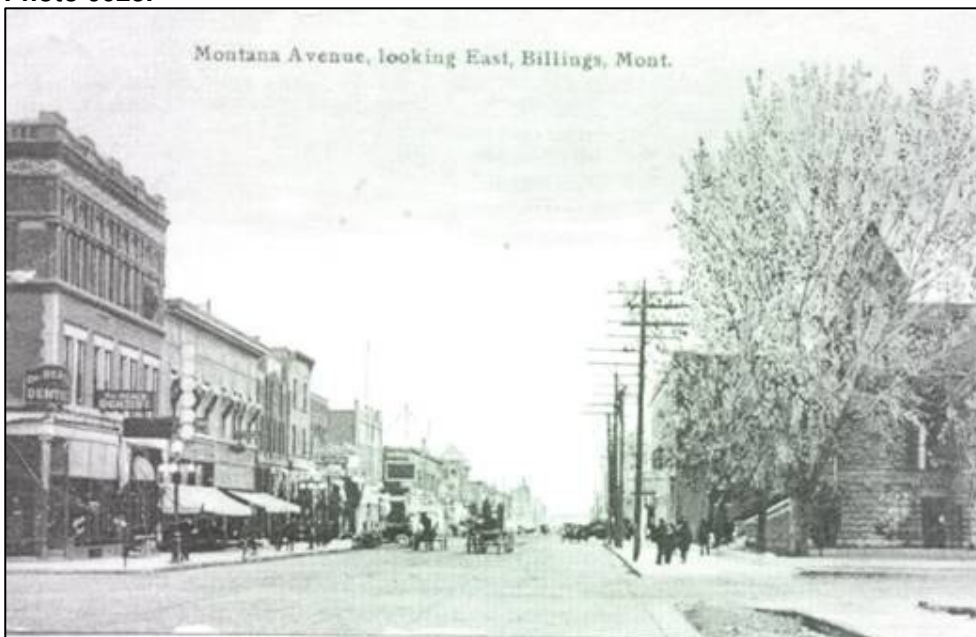
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Parmly Billings Memorial Library with Minnesota Avenue in background, c. 1901.
Photo 0025.



Montana Avenue, looking east from North 29th Street, c. 1912.
Photo 0026.

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Montana Avenue at 2800 Block, view to west, 1918.
Photo 0027.



Montana Avenue, looking east from mid-2800 Block, Billings Hardware to immediate left.
Photo 0028.

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Montana Avenue 1935, between North 29th Street and North 20th Street, view to west.
Photo 0029.



Montana Avenue 1935, looking northeast from North 30th Street.
Photo 0030.

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2525 Minnesota	Bissinger & Co. Hides	KITCHEN GALLERY 2601 MINNESOTA AVENUE BILLINGS, MT 59101	24YL1804
2601 Minnesota	Hardware Warehouse	KITCHEN GALLERY 2601 MINNESOTA AVENUE BILLINGS, MT 59101	24YL1805
2605 Minnesota	Swift & Co.	STEVE AND JONI HARMON 2605 MINNESOTA AVE BILLINGS, MT 59101	24YL1806
2611 Minnesota	Price Motor Sales	STEVE AND JONI HARMON 2605 MINNESOTA AVE BILLINGS, MT 59101	24YL 1807
2624 Minnesota	L&L Building	L&L DEVELOPMENT VENTURE LP PO BOX 1476 BILLINGS, MT 59103-1476	24YL0699
2702 Minnesota	P.W. McAdow Store	KARL MORLEDGE PO BOX 128 ROSCOE, MT 59071-0128	24YL1808
2704 Minnesota	Covington Building	KARL MORLEDGE PO BOX 128 ROSCOE, MT 59071-0128	24YL1809
2706-08 Minnesota	Standard Building	KARL MORLEDGE/LAURA MARIE ANDERSON PO BOX 128 ROSCOE, MT 59071-0128	24YL1810
2710 ½ Minnesota	M. Henihan Saloon	KEITH D & JERRY K GEERTZ MAIL TO: HARRY GEERTZ 620 17TH BILLINGS, MT 59102-5028	24YL1811
2712 Minnesota	Western Bar	BARBARA J MCKAY 3005 MARIGOLD DR BILLINGS, MT 59102-0428	24YL1812
2714 Minnesota	Wheel Bar	BARBARA J. MCKAY 3005 MARIGOLD DR BILLINGS, MT 59102-0428	24YL1813
2716 Minnesota	Globe Theater & Hotel	BARBARA J. MCKAY 3005 MARIGOLD DR BILLINGS, MT	24YL1814
2718 Minnesota	Crystal Bar	PATRICK C & ANGELINA CORMIER 220 N BROADWAY BILLINGS, MT 59101-1935	24YL1815
2720 Minnesota	Yukon Bar	RANDY & JANNA HAFER 631 N 26TH ST BILLINGS, MT 59101-1055	24YL1816
2804 Minnesota	Yegen Block	LJR, LLC 2804 MINNESOTA AVE BILLINGS, MT 59101-4148	24YL1817
2822 Minnesota	Montana Rescue Mission	MONTANA RESCUE MISSION 2822 MINNESOTA AVE BILLINGS, MT 59101-4148	24YL1818
2902 Minnesota	Silver Dollar Inn	EDWARD J TROUT	24YL1819

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		5415 FOREST HILLS DR BILLINGS, MT 59101-7208	
2910 Minnesota	Houge-Robinson & Co. Building	BUFFALO BREWING COMPANY INC PO BOX 1438 BILLINGS, MT 59103-1438	24YL1820
2912 Minnesota	Hanchett and Sons Furniture	OMNI PARTNERSHIP 3307 GRAND AVE STE 103B BILLINGS, MT 59102-6546	24YL1821
2920 Minnesota	Kirk's Grocery	ROGER A PINNICK 2922 MINNESOTA AVE BILLINGS, MT 59101-4054	24YL640
2922 Minnesota	Big 4 Store	ROGER A PINNICK 2922 MINNESOTA AVE BILLINGS, MT 59101-4054	24YL1822
2924 Minnesota	Dave's Garage	ROGER A PINNICK 2922 MINNESOTA AVE BILLINGS, MT 59101-4054	24YL1823
2702 Montana	Oliver Building	OLIVER BUILDING DEVELOPMENT VENTURE, L.P. PO BOX 2203 BILLINGS, MT 59103	24YI0700
2718 Montana	Selvidge-Babcock Building	STEVE NELSON 320 S. 24 TH ST BILLINGS, MT 59101	24YL1836
2802 Montana	Billings Hardware Building	MARY WESTWOOD PO BOX 2392 BILLINGS, MT 59103-2392	24YL1837
2822 Montana	Parmly Billings Library	WESTERN HERITAGE CENTER 2822 MONTANA AVE BILLINGS, MT 59101	24YL0075
2822 Montana	Ralston Cabin	WESTERN HERITAGE CENTER 2822 MONTANA AVE BILLINGS, MT 59101	24YL1838
2815 Montana	Colonial Café	MILLER TROIS LLC 4507 PALISADES PARK DR BILLINGS, MT 59106-1388	24YL1839
2817-19 Montana	Losekamp Block	BERT A & ANDREW NELSON 2817 MONTANA AVE BILLINGS, MT 59101-2306	24YL1840
2902 Montana	NORTERN PACIFICRR Freight House	BURLINGTON NORTHERN SANTA FE DIVISION OFFICE BUILDING 1555 CAMPUS WAY SUITE 201 BILLINGS, MT 59102	24YL1841
2905-07 Montana	American Dry Cleaners	FIRST NATIONAL PROPERTIES LLC 2905 MONTANA AVE BILLINGS, MT 59101-2143	24YL1842
2909-11 Montana	Connolly Saddlery	FRANCIS & SHANNON MIGNONE 2880 VIGILANTE TRAIL BILLINGS, MT 59101-1652	24YL1843
2919 Montana	Billings Times	BILLINGS TIMES INC 2919 MONTANA AVE	24YL1844

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		BILLINGS, MT 59101-2143	
2921 Montana	Service Candy Co.	PHOEBE KNAPP WARREN 229 CLARK AVENUE BILLINGS, MT 59101	24YL1845
2923 Montana	Pouder Furniture	HOSPITALITY CONCEPTS LLC 2923 MONTANA AVE BILLINGS, MT 59101-2143	24YL1846
10 S 26 th St	Maple Leaf Club	CITY OF BILLINGS PO BOX 1178 BILLINGS, MT 59103	24YL1824
14 S 27 th St	Glen Apartments	BDS PROPERTIES LLC OAKES, DAVID R & SHERLYN M 1617 1ST AVE N BILLINGS, MT 59101-2668	24YL1825
18 S 27 th St	Safeway Building	BDS PROPERTIES LLC DAVID R OAKES 1617 1ST AVE N BILLINGS, MT 59101-2668	24YL1826
1 South Broadway	Armour Cold Storage	URBAN FRONTIER VENTURE,LP 631 N 26TH ST BILLINGS, MT 59101-1055	24YL1583
2 South Broadway (28 th Street)	Ryan Grocery Warehouse	KB CHEMICAL INC. 2 SOUTH BROADWAY BILLINGS, MT 59101	24YL1827
19 S 28 th St	Rex Laundry	BDS PROPERTIES LLC DAVID R OAKES 1617 1ST AVE N BILLINGS, MT 59101-2668	24YL1828
20 S 28 th St	International Harvester	YELLOWSTONE PAPER COMPANY PO BOX 1557 BILLINGS, MT 59103-1557	24YL1829
4 N 29 th St	Yates Building	BENJAMIN L BROWN 2905 MONTANA AVE BILLINGS, MT 59101-2143	24YL1830
2 S 29 th St	Malin-Yates Building	MONTANA RAIL LINK WASHINGTON CORP PO BOX 16390 MISSOULA, MT 59808	24YL1831
21 S 29 th St	Sunset Garage	MONTANA RESCUE MISSION 2822 MINNESOTA AVE BILLINGS, MT 59101-4148	24YL1832
29 S 29 th St	Otis-Kiichli Candy Company Building	LEVERN D. SEAL PO BOX 1119 BILLINGS, MT 59103-1119	24YL1833
24 S 30 th St	Crane Co. Building	JEM LLC JERRY T RAY 2646 GRAND AVE STE 1 BILLINGS, MT 59102-7113	24YL1834
2921 1 st Ave South	Community Gas & Oil Building	LEVERN SEAL PO BOX 1119 BILLINGS, MT 59103-1119	24YL1835